

JOSHUA 1

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Joshua chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we begin this exciting and fascinating book, as you will see.

We have just completed our study through the five books of Moses or the Pentateuch.

The book of Genesis is the book of Beginnings.

Here we saw the beginning of creation, of man and woman, of marriage, all that was good. And we also saw the beginning of sin, of murder, of polygamy, of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel and much more in regard to beginnings.

For the believer, we too have new beginnings in Christ, the old is passed away and all has become new in Him!

Then we moved into the book of Exodus as God delivered His people from their bondage in Egypt.

This is a beautiful picture of God's redemption of His people, not only the Jews, but you and me being redeemed from the bondage of sin that this world had us in!

From there we moved to the book of Leviticus, and this book focused on the priestly duties.

For us, the book of Leviticus pictures our fellowship and worship of God, that we can only approach God through the shedding of blood, through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, through Jesus and His finished work!

Then we moved into the book of Numbers that focused on the wilderness wanderings for the children of Israel because of their unbelief.

For us as Christians, I believe the picture being painted is the testing and temptations we face as God's people. You see, the situations we face are both temptations and testing and how we respond to them will determine which one it is in our lives.

It plays out like this. Satan brings about temptations as he tries to draw us away from God, to get us to do things that are not pleasing in God's eyes.

On the other hand, God is testing our faith. What does that mean? Testing relates to the same situation and yet, if we are obedient to the Lord, if we walk by faith trusting in Him, it will draw us closer to God. And even if we do fail and yet learn from it, it should draw us closer to Him through it, it is still a test to show us what is in our heart and cause us to depend more on Him!

And we just finished up the book of Deuteronomy where Moses reviewed the Law of God before the next generation who were to enter into the Promise Land.

For us, I believe the picture is that of obedience to the Lord!

Tonight, we begin the book of Joshua, the first of the 12 historical books that cover Joshua through Esther.

This is a continuation from the book of Deuteronomy as the mantle of leadership is passed from Moses to Joshua.

And, once again we will see that this book is rich with spiritual lessons we can apply to our lives. Remember what Paul said regarding the things that happened to the children of Israel in I Corinthians 10:11, "**Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition [warning], upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**"

You see, these things happened to them, and we can learn from them and folks, if we don't learn from the past, we will be prone to make the same mistakes as they have done!

Also, Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”**

Seeing the faithfulness of God and the lessons that He has for us in the Old Testament helps us to live out our faith and have the confidence that God is with us.

What does that mean?

It means our hope rests fully upon Him and no matter what may come our way, no matter how big the giants in our life are, the problems in our life may be, I rest in Him. Thus, I learn patience and have the comfort of God in my life because I trust in Him.

That is what we will see with Joshua and the children of Israel as they enter the Promise Land!

I like what Warren Wiersbe wrote regarding why we should even study the book of Joshua. Why is this book so important to us?

He wrote,

Why should anybody today study the Book of Joshua, an ancient book that gives a grim account of war, slaughter, and conquest?

If the Book of Joshua were fiction, we might accept it as an exciting adventure story; but the book conveys real history and is a part of inspired Holy Scripture.

What does it mean to us today?

“There never was a good war, or a bad peace,” Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1783; but it’s possible that the wise old patriot was wrong for once.

After all, God called Joshua to be a general and to lead the army of Israel in holy conquest.

But there were bigger issues involved in that conquest than the invasion and possession of a land-issues that touch our lives and our faith today. . . .

The Book of Joshua is the book of new beginnings for the people of God, and many believers today need a new beginning.

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel claimed their inheritance and enjoyed the blessings of the land that God had prepared for them, *“as the days of heaven upon the earth”* (Deut 11:21).

That’s the kind of life God wants us to experience today. Jesus Christ, our Joshua, wants to lead us in conquest now and share with us all the treasures of His wonderful inheritance. He has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3), but too often we live like defeated paupers.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT, p. 378

Again, these lessons are for us to learn and apply to our lives. Yes, Joshua and the children of Israel fought physical battles and we, for the most part are not involved in physical battles. We are fighting spiritual battles every day and yes, they may manifest itself and I think they do manifest themselves in the physical realm, but they are truly spiritual battles that need to be approached that way if we want to have the victorious Christian life!

Let me set the stage for this book of Joshau.

Moses has been leading the children of Israel for 40 years now. He is 120 years old and now, this Lawgiver was going to pass off the scene, he was going to die.

Joshua will now lead the children of Israel into the Promise Land. They are on the boarder of Canaan and that is as far as Moses could take them, this great Lawgiver of Israel.

What is interesting to me, and this is a God thing, the name, “*Joshua*” means, (*Yehoshua* in Hebrew) “*YAHWEH IS SALVATION*” and his Greek name, interestingly enough, is *Jesus*, (*IESOUS*)!

Folk’s, that is exactly what the Bible teaches regarding our salvation.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that the Law cannot save us, it can only show us how far short we come to God’s standard of righteousness, which is perfection.

In fact, the Law could never save us because all the Law could do, like a mirror, is show us what we look like. And we look like sinners whose sin has separated us from God.

The Law has no power to save, none at all!

What can we do about that?

Only Joshua or Jesus can save us from our sins!

In John 1:17 we are told, “**For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**”

Grace is unmerited favor and thus, we don’t deserve to be saved but God freely extends that gift to us, and that is the truth, that is what Jesus taught!

Paul makes this point regarding the grace of God extended to us in Romans 8:2-4, where he wrote, “**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**”

That is what the Lord has done for us and if you still think the Law can save, listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 3:19-20, **“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”**

I think that is very clear, the Law does not save us, but it does expose our sin!

Then why have the Law in the first place?

That is a great question.

It is not only there to show us what God requires and to expose our sin, as I have said.

In Galatians 3:23-26 Paul explains why the Law is important to us and he tells us all that the Law can do. He wrote, **“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

You see, the Law shows us we are sinners, that there is nothing we can do about our condition and thus, it drives us into the arms of our Savior, into the arms of Jesus!

The Law is good, the Law is perfect, that is not the problem. The problem is that we are not and thus, we need the righteousness of Christ imputed or poured into our lives by faith!

I like the way that Alan Redpath ties this all together as he wrote, ***“In other words, the deliverance from Egypt was only in preparation for the enjoyment of Canaan. The Passover, the shedding of the blood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh’s hosts, all would have been useless unless they led to the place of rest in Canaan. Furthermore, it was only by possession of the land of Canaan that the promise to Abraham could be fulfilled.”***

I believe the book of Joshua is a beautiful picture of the blessings and victories that God's people can obtain as they walk by faith. It truly is a Spirit-filled life or a life that is controlled by the Spirit of God and that is where we will find those victories in the battles we face!

That is what Canaan, for us, is all about.

Tragically, many Christians live in a wilderness and rarely move into Canaan!

Now I do understand that some feel that Canaan is a picture of Heaven, but I disagree.

Even some of the old hymns speak of it that way, like the famous *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*.

Listen to this song and you will see what I mean. It goes like this.

*Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry he home*

*I looked over Jordan and what did I see
Coming for to carry he home
A band of angels coming after me
Coming for to carry me home*

*Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home*

*If you get there before I do
Coming for to carry me home
Tell all my friends I'm coming too
Coming for to carry me home*

*Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home*

- Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

I hope that Canaan isn't a picture of Heaven because, as we go through the book of Joshua, look at all the battles that are going to take place in Canaan!

I don't expect there to be any battles in Heaven except when Michael the Archangel casts Satan and his demons out of Heaven at the midway point of the 7-year Tribulation Period! And we don't fight in that battle!

Again, I believe it is a picture of the Spirit-filled life and the battles we face as we walk in the Spirit!

Paul even speaks of this in Galatians 5:16-17 as he wrote, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”**

Let me also share this with you.

An interesting book to compare Joshua to is the book of Ephesians. In the first 3 chapters of Ephesians Paul shows us all the spiritual blessings that we have in the heavenly places in Christ. It deals with doctrine.

Then, in Ephesian 4:1 we are told, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”**

In other words, these are the blessings that God has for you, now walk accordingly, walk in the Spirit.

How can we do that?

By surrendering to Him, by putting on the whole armor of God, by walking carefully in this life.

Why the full armor of God?

Because of the spiritual battles we will face as we walk in the Spirit!

But don't forget that the victory we have is only found in Jesus.

It is as Paul said in Romans 8:37-39, **“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

May we not forget that! You see, what we need to do is just as the children of Israel needed to do, walk by faith, take those steps and see what God will do in you and through you for His glory!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

The wilderness experience of Israel depicts believers who live in unbelief and disobedience and don't enter into the rest and riches of their inheritance in Christ, either because they don't know it's there or they know and refuse to enter.

Like Israel, they come to a crisis place (Kadesh Barnea), but refuse to obey the Lord and claim His will for their lives (Num 13-14).

They are delivered from Egypt, but Egypt is still in their hearts; and like the Jews, they have a desire to go back to the old life (Ex 16:1-3; Num 11:1; 14:2-4; see Isa 30:3; 31:1).

Instead of marching through life as conquerors, they meander through life as wanderers and never enjoy the fullness of what God has planned for them. It's this crowd that is especially addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Canaan represents the Christian life as it ought to be: conflict and victory, faith and obedience, spiritual riches and rest. It's a life of faith, trusting Jesus Christ, our Joshua, the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10), to lead us from victory to victory (1 John 5:4-5).

When Israel was in Egypt, the enemy was around them, making their lives miserable.

When they crossed the Red Sea, Israel put the enemy behind them; but when the nation crossed the Jordan River, they saw new enemies before them, and they conquered these enemies by faith.

The victorious Christian life isn't a once-for-all triumph that ends all our problems. As pictured by Israel in the Book of Joshua, the victorious Christian life is a series of conflicts and victories as we defeat one enemy after another and claim more of our inheritance to the glory of God.

The eminent Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte used to say that the victorious Christian life was "a series of new beginnings."

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, pp. 380-381

How true that is. It is one battle after another in the Christian life and I think we all see that and understand it. We may not like it, we may get tired of it, as we will see with the children of Israel, and it cost them dearly. We need to continue on in this battle and finish this race of faith strong and God has given us the power by His Spirit to do so!

One last point and that is who wrote the book of Joshua?

The Jewish Talmud tells us that it was Joshua, but we can't be dogmatic about that, but I do believe it was Joshua as you look at how this book was written. But in reality, the Holy Spirit wrote these words through Joshua.

Also, the last part of the book, the last part of chapter 24 we see Joshua die and Eleazar the High Priest die, and thus, many feel that Eleazar's son, Phinehas wrote the last five verses of Joshua!

I know, a long introduction, but it is important we understand what this book is about before we begin digging into it.

With that said, let's begin reading in Joshua chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

JOSHUA 1

VERSES 1-2

Moses served the Lord faithfully for 40 years. Make no mistake about it, those were 40 tough years and this is all the recognition he gets!

Again, notice what we read of the work that he did. We are told, "**Moses My servant is dead.**"

Why is that?

Because he was the servant of God and servants are not exalted, their master is. And in this case, it is the Lord who worked through Moses and will now work through Joshua, another servant of God!

It is as one writer put it, "*No man is indispensable. God's work goes on uninterrupted. The instruments are changed, but the Master-hand is the same, and lays one tool aside and takes another out of the tool-chest as He will.*" (Maclaren)

Absolutely, that is the way it should be. And here is a key point for leaders. A true leader stays the course even when it's not popular.

People have all kinds of ideas of how things should be done, how things should be taught and if I listened to every one of them, I would go crazy! I listen to what the Lord is showing me and that does not make me popular, but I am not here to be popular, I am here to teach you the things of God!

What I want you to also notice here is the easy transition from Moses to Joshua, that is how it should be if God is on the throne and not man.

Matthew Henry wrote this in regard to this issue, ***“God will change hands to show that whatever instrument He uses, He is not tied to any.”***

Also, we see A. W. Tozer write, ***“When a man of God dies, nothing of God dies. When a man of God fails, nothing of God fails.”***

I think that is an important lesson for us to understand. That we are not to exalt the men that God uses but to exalt the God who uses men!

And notice, Moses is **DEAD** and **NOW** Joshua; it is time for you to rise up and lead these people!

Joshua served the Lord under Moses for 40 years and God was preparing him for the work he was now to do. But he was not going to accomplish this in his own strength.

In Deuteronomy 34:9 we are told, **“Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.”**

Joshua was empowered by the Spirit of God to do the work of God and folk's; we too must be empowered by the Spirit of God if we are going to do the work of God! If we are going to see those victories in our life!

VERSE 3

Notice how this plays out here.

God has “**given**” them the land, past tense.

What does that mean, they are not in the land yet?

What that means is that this is a done deal.

Well, not exactly. God has done His part. But they must also walk by faith into the land, believing in the promises God has given to them.

You see, God's promise and man's responsibility working side-by-side!

Ray Stedman put it like this. He wrote, ***“You can possess all that you want but never more than you take. If you're satisfied with where you are and how much of the Spirit you possess you'll never take any more than what you have. If you haven't possessed more it's because you haven't wanted more - you can have all you want.”***

The same is true for us as Christians. God has given us these victories and we must walk by faith.

Alan Redpath wrote the following in regard to the Christians victory in Christ and stepping out in faith.

This is what he wrote,

Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it.

True, God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, but the blessing is in heavenly places, and these are places to which Satan has access, and where he can still cast all his fiery darts.

God does not bless His child unless He sees him eager for the blessing . . . He desires every one of His children to press in against all the assaults of the enemy, that we may lay hold of that which is our inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that every foe we shall ever meet in that battle already has been met and conquered by our Joshua.

- Alan Redpath

Here's the thing. In these battles we face, like lust, pride, greed and-so-on, God has given us the victory but unless we step forward and tread upon that territory, giving it to the Lord, we won't see the victory!

Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**"

Do you see that Paul says we can do *ALL* things through Christ and not apart from Him!

Also, in I John 5:4-5 we are told, "**For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**"

Thus, may we walk by faith in the Spirit and see the salvation that the Lord will bring into our lives!

Again, God has given us the victory. That is not the issue. The issue is are we willing to walk by faith and take the victory that God has given to us?

As we will see, God has given the children of Israel a large portion of the land and yet, they never possessed all this land because they did not walk by faith and take it, they came up short!

VERSES 4-5

Look at all this land that God had promised them. It was all theirs!

One commentator estimated all the land that God gave the children of Israel to be about 30,000 square miles! Some feel it is as high as 60,000 square miles. Whatever the case, they did not occupy all that God had given to them!

And this amazed me, I did not realize this but in Solomon's day they only occupied 3,000 square miles or 1/10th of all that God had promised them! (Today they only occupy 8,469 square miles!)

How can they do that? How come they did not take all the land that God promised them?

Now, before we come down too hard on the children of Israel, I wonder how much God has given to us that we are not possessing!

Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 1:3, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.**"

You see, I think many times we don't realize all that we have in our hands, all that God has given to us and all we must do is walk by faith!

The reason they did not obtain all this land was because they did not walk by faith!

It is as this story illustrates for us.

There was a man who tried to rob a convenience store and did manage to get away with \$125 as he held the clerk up with a gun.

He was finally arrested for his crime.

Interestingly enough, the old gun that he used to rob the store was an old Civil War-era pistol and it was worth around \$23,000!

Look at the treasure that he had right there in his hand, and he did not even realize it and many Christians are like that!

Now fear can cause us to stop moving forward and thus, God tells Joshua that He will be with them, He will not leave them, He will lead them all the way!

It is as Paul reminds us in Hebrews 13:5-6, **“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”**

You see, with a perspective like that, nothing will stop you from walking in the Lord!

VERSES 6-9

Why do you think the Lord told Joshua in these 4 verses to be strong and of good courage three times?

Because Joshua saw himself as weak and he was fearful of what was ahead!

Now let’s think about that. ***“How can God use a person like that?”***

Because it is much easier for God to use a man who knows he can't do it on his own and yet he still will walk by faith than one who is self-confident, self-assured, self-reliant, is full of self!

You see, God wants Joshua to be strong in the Lord and not in himself. And as he rests in the Lord, he will see the victories that God will give to him, and I believe the same is true for each of us.

And think about this. What Moses couldn't accomplish in 40 years, Joshua was going to do in just three days, crossing over into the land of Canaan, the Promise Land!

I like the way that Boice sums this up for us. He wrote, *“Joshua seems to have been afraid of this responsibility. I say this because the most repeated words in the chapter are those commanding him not to be afraid. God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous three times (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9), then adds, ‘Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged’ (Joshua 1:9). At the end of the chapter, the people tell Joshua the same thing: ‘Only be strong and courageous!’ (Joshua 1:18). In spite of what must therefore have been a very acute sense of inadequacy, Joshua did indeed take charge. From the very first, he showed that he was the Lord’s man for this hour.”*

Now let's take a look back and ask ourselves this question. *“In their wilderness wanderings, who was leading the children of Israel?”*

It was the Lord by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day!

Now, as the children of Israel prepare to enter into the Promise Land, who is going to lead them?

Once again it is going to be the Lord but not by a pillar of fire by night or a cloud by day but by His Word! And we will see that as we go through this book of Joshua but right here, we see the Lord tell Joshua to focus on the Word and obey it, let it lead you!

Now, as Christians, who is leading us?

Again, it is the Lord by His Spirit through His Word!

In Psalm 119 we are told how God's Word lights our path and guides us. We are told, **"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. . . . Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me."** Psalm 119:105, 133.

And in II Timothy 3:16-17 we are told, **"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."**

God told Joshua that if you want the victory, then know My Word, make it part of your daily life. Mediate upon it, extract all the spiritual nutrients you can from it to help you stay spiritually healthy and then walk in them, **"For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."** Joshua 1:8.

In regard to meditating upon God's Word, please understand that it does not mean turning off your brain or emptying your mind, but thinking upon God's Word, praying about it, going over and over it in your mind so it becomes part of your life and just extracting all you can from it.

One person put it like this, ***"Mediating on the Word of God is to your Spirit, what digestion is to your body."***

Let God's Word be nourishing to your spirit as you allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you and open up God's Word to you!

Stand strong in God's Word, don't deviate from it, and see the victory that God will bring into your life!

The end result of obedience to God's Word, walking as He leads, is the blessings of God.

But obedience is born out of trust and the only way you will be able to trust the Lord is when you get to know Him.

Let me show you what I mean.

Say you were blind, and you got a new Seeing Eye dog. It is going to take some time for you to learn to trust him, that he knows what he is doing, that he is going to stop at an intersection.

But the more you spend time with him the more you will get to know him, and you will learn to trust in him even though you can't see where you are going, but he can!

You will end up obeying his leadership and that is faith! The same is true with the Lord.

The more we spend time with Him, the more we allow God's Word to strengthen us and encourage us, the more we will take those steps of obedience in accordance with His Word!

The result of trusting in the Lord, walking as He leads, is His blessings will flow into your life, as I have said.

Psalm 1:1-3 tells us, "**Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.**"

May we do that, may we walk according to the high calling by which we have been called, trusting in the Lord as He leads us!

And what Joshua was told to do, the Lord wants us to do and there are just four simple points. They are . . .

- *Joshua was to know God's Word – Joshua 1:7a*
- *Joshua was to talk about God's Word – Joshua 1:8a—v.8a*
- *Joshua was to meditate on God's Word – Joshua 1:8b*
- *Joshua was to obey God's Word – Joshua 1:7b, 8c*

Not complicated and yet, many today will spend their time on social media, looking at this and looking at that and neglect or they won't take the time to know God's Word, talk about God's Word, mediate on God's Word and obey God's Word!

And look at Joshua 1:9 once again. There is the encouragement, God is with us, He is by our side, He is leading us, just as He was with Joshua and the children of Israel!

Paul tells us in Romans 8:31, **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”**

The reality is this, and we have talked about it before. There is no one who can stop the work of God in our lives except us! We can harden our hearts to what God is doing, we can ignore God and that will halt what God is trying to do in us and through us!

Thus, may we learn to walk by faith, trusting in the Lord and seeing all He can and will do in us and through us for His glory!

As we continue on here in Joshua, beginning in verse 10, Joshua prepares the Jewish people to cross the Jordan River into the Promise Land!

VERSES 10-11

Can you imagine the excitement, the anticipation of entering into the Promise Land?

There were those 400 years in Egypt that prior generations were slaves.

As they got out of Egypt, they then waited for 40 years and now in just three days they would see the fulfillment of what God had promised them.

Yes, they could have entered 40 years earlier, but unbelief kept them out and that generation who refused to enter by faith died in the wilderness.

Now it was time for this next generation to enter in, to walk by faith into the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

For us as Christians, God gives to us promises and sometimes it is a three day wait and other times it may be longer!

But He is faithful. For us, as God makes the promise and He prepares us for the work during that time, when He tells us to go do we stop in unbelief and wander in the wilderness until we are willing to walk by faith? I think we have all experienced that!

All the children of Israel had was God's promise to them, His Word, and folks, that is what we have!

God prepares the work for us; He prepares us for the work and then He calls us to go and walk by faith!

VERSES 12-15

Remember back in Numbers chapter 32 where Ruben, Gad and the ½ tribe of Manasseh told Moses that they did not want to enter into the Promise Land.

The cities, the land that the children of Israel captured on the east side of the Jordan River was fertile, good grazing land for their livestock. And they were happy where they were at!

This is an amazing statement by these 2½ tribes after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years because of unbelief and not entering into this land. And now, they were doing what their fathers had done!

And Moses was not happy, not at all! He felt that their actions, their compromise would discourage the rest of the nation, and no one would enter in.

Thus, maybe another 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and Moses couldn't take that; he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

But they told Moses that they would enter in, the fighting men, to assist their brethren in the battles and once they obtained their victories in Canaan, they would return home to the east side of the Jordan River where their families remained.

And Moses accepted their request and the vow that they made.

Joshua is now reminding these 2½ tribes of the promise they made to Moses, that it was now time to fulfill this promise and come alongside and assist their brethren in the battles that they will face in Canaan!

Keep in mind that these 2½ tribes that were living outside of the land of promise are a picture of Christians who refuse to enter into the land of promise or that Spirit-filled life, that walk of faith.

They are content to remain on the boarder of the Promise Land and yet refuse to go any further.

And like these 2½ tribes, the enemy is quick to attack them.

For Ruben, Gad and the ½ tribe of Manasseh, they were the first to go into captivity because they didn't have the protection of the nation.

And for Christian's who live outside of the Promise Land, they are outside of the protection of the body of Christ, and it is easy for them to be taken into captivity. They are walking in the power of their flesh instead of the Spirit!

Let me ask you this. ***“Why couldn't Moses or Joshua force these 2½ tribes to enter into the Promise Land?”***

Because you can't force anyone to enter in, just as you can't force anyone to live a Spirit-filled life or to become a Christian as well.

One writer put it like this,

The profound spiritual principle at work here, applies always to God's people. We are given the free-will choice to decide for ourselves at what level of spiritual attainment we shall live in our walk with God.

We can walk in the wilderness of divided loyalties and divided affections until the day we die.

We can settle down cozily just a short way from the life of conquest and victory to be content with only a distant view of our inheritance in Christ.

Or with courage, faith and joy in the Lord we can enter fully into the victory and rest intended for us by our Father.

- Phillip Keller

Absolutely. We have free will, we have a choice to make!

Now what do I mean by a Spirit-filled life?

One that is controlled by the Spirit of God, that we surrender our lives to Him, our will becomes His will in our lives as we walk by faith.

Paul put it like this in Ephesians 5:15-21, **“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

You see, it is a walk of faith as we are obedient to the will of God for our lives. His will, not ours and in reality, His will becomes our will, as we desire to follow Him! And out of that there is the tremendous blessings of God that a life lived outside of the Promise Land, in the wilderness you might say, will never experience!

VERSES 16-18

These 2½ tribes tell Joshua that they will follow him, they will assist their brethren in these battles as they promised Moses, but they did have one pre-requisite.

Here we go again! But this is a good one.

This precondition was that they would follow Joshua as long as Joshua was following the Lord.

Folks, there is nothing wrong with that, in fact, it is 100% correct!

Yes, they did recognize Joshua as their leader as long as he was walking with the Lord. If he didn't walk with the Lord, then they were not going to follow him any longer!

Tragically today we see Christians follow pastors and teachers that are not following the Lord!

How can I say that?

Because if what they are saying, if what they are teaching is not found in the Word of God, then it is not of God, and they are not following God but they many times end up following teachings that are nothing more than doctrines of demons!

I also want you to see the encouragement these 2½ tribes give to Joshua as they told him, **“only be strong and of good courage.”**

Yes folks, even leaders need to be encouraged. They need your prayers. Maybe these 2½ tribes saw that Joshua was a little anxious with the task that was before him, would the people follow him.

And they are encouraging Joshua that they would follow him as long as he followed the Lord, as I have said. Thus, don't be fearful because God is with you, and we are following! I like their hearts in this!

As I begin to close this evening, let me share this with you. This is from Harry Ironside. He wrote,

Let us ask our own hearts, ***“What kind of a Christian am I?”*** [Am I living all out] for God, or am I dwelling on the border of the world? . . . We died with Christ at Calvary when He died in our place. There we were crucified with Him.

Is this a reality to our souls?

When Christians come to me and ask if there is any harm in this and that, something that pertains to the east side of Jordan, something in which the world indulges, I say, ***“Why don't you ask if there would be any harm in going to a prayer meeting?”***

“Oh,” they answer, *“Anybody knows there is no harm in going to a prayer meeting.”*

Well, that is the answer. They would not think of asking the question if there was not a doubt in their minds.

[When it comes] to something of which you stand in doubt, you may be sure it will never help you spiritually; it will never help to make Christ more precious to you; it will never make you love His Word more; it will never enable you to triumph over sin.

A great many of these things may not be wicked but are just bordering on the edge of the world, as it were.

- Harry Ironside

That is what we are seeing here with the Jordan River being the dividing line between a person's total commitment to the Lord and just a partial commitment. Between God's perfect will and God's permissive will!

And I will close with this.

Where are you living?

On which side of the Jordan have you settled?

And is it time to change neighborhoods?