

Last week we looked at the transition in leadership from Moses to Joshua. We saw how Joshua was the same as the name for Jesus who leads us into the ultimate promised land. We also considered the fact that these transitions take place in our lives as well. Those who mentor us and have been godly examples to us in time graduate to their place in the heavenly realm, and we are left to pick up the torch and stand in the gap they leave. The instructions to Joshua resonate with us, reminding us what we must do if we are to be successful to fulfill the destiny God has for us.

In our passage for today, God is speaking instruction and encouragement to Joshua. He had just promised that every place the soles of his feet trod would be conquered. God continued by describing the extent of the land He was giving them. ⁴ *From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.* Joshua 1:4 God described the area that was to belong to Israel as He had described it to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-20.ⁱ Even under kings David and Solomon, it would cover only a part of what is described here. The northern boundary is Lebanon, the eastern is the Euphrates, the western is the Mediterranean. Numbers 34:3ⁱⁱ tells us the southern boundary is the southern tip of the Dead Sea. The national boundaries today go further south to the Red Sea, but the eastern boundary is a tiny fraction of what is described here. David Ogunde tells us, *"In terms of current political boundaries, the promised land would thus cover modern Israel, the whole of Jordan, a large part of Saudi Arabia, half of Iraq, the whole of Lebanon, part of Syria and the whole of Kuwait."*ⁱⁱⁱ

What happened? Every place Joshua's soles trod was given to them, but they got comfortable and settled down. Even within the boundaries of what is today called Israel, the Canaanites remained. They became a thorn in Israel's side, and their idols lured Israel away from faith in God. It was their lack of faith in God that kept them from receiving all God had promised them (Hebrews 3:19^{iv}). **What a warning for us today to never stop taking the spiritual land in our own hearts and in our families and culture!**

Comfort and compromise often tempt us to stop short of partaking in all of God's generous promises. Think of the difference in the world today if they had taken all that land. Most of their enemies would not exist. There would be no struggle for space. They would have huge oil reserves. Instead those things their enemies wealthy.

In the spiritual realm the same is true for us. If we don't take the spiritual land, press the fight onward, we settle for far less than God has for us. Families face crises on their own because they refuse to become part of a family of God. We cave in to temptations because we have not become strong in God's Word. Nor do we have the joy of seeing souls won because our hearts are set on the passing things of this world that never satisfy. And so, we become discouraged with this life and disappointed in the things the world offers and miss the encouragement, peace, and joy of life in Christ.

Pastor David Jackman tells us that ***Because there is never any shortage of power or depletion of God's purpose on his part, it must be true that none of us has less of God and his promised blessings than we truly desire.***^v As I have said before, "Our want is broken." Our desires are so wrapped up in the temporal that we miss the spiritual blessings of God that include peace in our souls. We will not do what Jesus instructs us to

do. *Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest* (Matthew 11:28^{vi}). Instead we go to our own efforts and go about our own way that only makes matters worse. **Our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.** Because He has put His very nature in us, we are expected to do just that! Beware of forgetting the purpose for your existence (2 Peter 3:17^{vii}). May God give us a passion and hunger for more of God and to experience the promises of God.

The people of Canaan had superior weaponry. There were still giants in the land. Some of them had walled cities. They had alliances to help one another against Israel. That had to be daunting. But Joshua had the promises of God, and so do we. We look at our entertainment industry and educational system of indoctrination and our task seems impossible. But never forget the promises of God. If we remain in Christ, we will bear much fruit (John 15:5^{viii}). God is always superior in power to anything the world can throw at us. Let us not be found to fall short of taking all the spiritual territory the Lord has for us. Because others do not do so does not excuse our disobedience.

⁵ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Joshua 1:5 These three sentences were three powerful promises Joshua must have held dear to His heart. The first was that no man would be able to stand before him. That means that every enemy soldier he encountered would fall. Battles then were hand to hand. Imagine how hearts pounded when lines of warriors clashed. One wrong move and you are dead. In every encounter it was to the death. Joshua is getting old. He has had a lot of battle experience, and God is telling him he will continue to be successful in every encounter. How that must have encouraged him to be confident in battle.

What battles are you facing right now? During this epidemic there are many. Whatever it is, never forget that Jesus is with you. That is the next statement. *Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.* Moses counted on God's presence and would not move without it (Exodus 33:14-16^{ix}). This does not mean God would speak to Joshua face to face like He did with Moses. We see a very different relationship. He will meet with Joshua in the form of the Angel of the LORD. He will speak to Joshua through the Scriptures and the High Priest. Each of us has our own way of communing with the Lord, but the Word of God is the plumbline for us all (Isaiah 8:20^x). It is the revelation of God's promises and purposes.

You say, but pastor, Moses was special. What made Moses special? It was his communion with God. From the burning bush to the tent of meeting, Moses heard from God and obeyed. Well, Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me”* (John 10:4^{xi}). Isn't that the same thing? Our problem is that we often refuse to take the time to be still, to read the Scriptures and wait on God to speak to us. If we want to see the fruit of the promise, the victorious presence of Christ in us, we need to take the time to listen and then obey.

And the third promise is that God would never leave or forsake him. We are assured in the New Testament that those who are in Christ have the same promise. He is with us. It is no less real than how God was with Moses or how we will read of how He was with Joshua. He has promised to never leave us or forsake us just as He promised Joshua (Hebrews 13:5^{xii}). That should give us great courage as it gave Joshua. Joshua knew that if God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31^{xiii})? We need not fear anything that God allows in our lives. He is with us and will never forsake us, for we

have been adopted into the family of God (Matthew 29:20^{xiv}; Romans 8:15^{xv}). That should be the comfort and confidence we live in moment by moment. The all-powerful God of the universe loves us and is with us. He will see you through whatever He allows in your life (1 Corinthians 10:13^{xvi}).

⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Joshua 1:6 Joshua is to be strong and courageous for he shall (that is with that courage and strength he will) cause God's people to inherit the land in fulfillment of the 400 year old promise to Abraham, a promise repeated to Isaac and Jacob. It is important that we understand that a part of the promise is not only the land, but also a blessing that would come out of that land to bless the world (Genesis 12:3^{xvii}). And of course, that blessing is Jesus.

When Joseph's father Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, was dying, he asked that his bones be buried in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:5^{xviii}). When Joseph was dying, he made his brothers promise that when God came to their aid to then take his bones and bury them in the Promised Land. Archeologists found the small pyramid in which they believe his bones were kept until they were carried to the Promised Land as Joseph had requested. At that location in Goshen they found remains of a statue that had worn a coat of many colors. The Israelites had lived with this promise of the land for 400 years and now Joshua is about to finally lead them to the fulfillment.

And you thought some promises in your life were taking a long time to come to pass! We who live in the microwave age with instant communication around the world are too easily upset when something takes longer than expected. God knows the right time. If it is a request according to His will, and if it does not violate the will of the person you are praying for, it will happen in God's perfect time. God told Abraham it would be generations later as the iniquity of the Amorites had to come to the level of impending judgment. Then their conquest of the land would be righteous judgment.

I've seen prayers answered in minutes and others that were only answered after years of waiting. And sometimes God does not answer in ways that we can observe. This 400-year-old promise we are reading about should remind us that God is never in a hurry.

⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. Joshua 1:7 His courage and strength were to be focused on living according to the revelation God gave to Moses, the first five books of our Bible. There is a series of instructions directing this focus. The first is to carefully do *all* of the commands in the Word. He can't use it in a cafeteria fashion, picking which parts he will obey and which he will ignore. Total obedience is required of him if he wishes to succeed.

While we are no longer under the 613 laws of the old covenant (Romans 8:2-4^{xix}), Jesus does give us quite a few commands in the Gospels. Unlike the old laws that dictated what you could eat and wear, society rules, and worship instructions in order to be an example as a godly nation that would be blessed with prosperity, the commands of Jesus are descriptions of what our new life in Him should be like. The promise is not physical prosperity but communion with God, a restoration of what was lost in the Garden when Adam and Eve walked with God (Genesis 3:8^{xx}). When we obey, we have fellowship with Jesus! That is better than any physical prosperity promised under the Old

Covenant. It is the blessing of the fruits of the Spirit, peace in the storms of life, assurance in spiritual battles, and joy inexpressible and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8^{xxi})!

But when we disobey that communion is broken. God withdraws from communing with us when we are in rebellion. It is a sign to us that something is wrong. Our peace fades (Colossians 3:15^{xxii}). Worry sets in. We become anxious and try to figure out what we can do, instead of going to prayer and getting God's answer. And in many cases, it is because we have an idea what God would tell us, and we don't want to hear it.

One example is forgiveness. We have determined we will not forgive someone when God has told us we must, for we have been forgiven (Matthew 6:14,15^{xxiii}). Another is our complaint over hardships. Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24^{xxiv}). But we often decide we want more comfortable lives, and we refuse to go where He is leading or give what He is asking of us. The Apostle Paul tells us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17^{xxv}), but we want to relegate it to ten minutes in the morning and before we eat. Brothers and sisters if we want to be victorious in this battle of taking the land for the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women, we need to obey the Commander. Or in the words of this verse, be careful to observe all that God has commanded us. That is when we will have success wherever we go!

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful 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. Joshua 1:8 Then Joshua is told that he is not to turn one way or the other from that written Word. No compromise is allowed if he wants good success. There is no room for his own ideas that contradict a command. Success is dependent on complete obedience.

Following that is the command in verse 8 to talk about God's Word all the time and meditate in it day and night. This reminds us of God's commands in the Shema - to put the Law as frontlets on our foreheads and bind them to our arms, to speak of them when we go out and when we come in, and to teach them to our children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9^{xxvi}). And the purpose stated here was so that they would then be careful to do it all. Then they would find that they would prosper and be successful. Their prosperity and success were to show the surrounding nations that the God of Israel was the only true God. It was to prompt in the nations a desire to learn about Him.

If that command to meditate in the Word day and night was true for Joshua when only the initial revelation of God was in writing, to what extent should we value the entire revelation we have received in the Bible? Wycliffe sent out a plea for funds to follow up in areas where only a portion of the Word was translated. They had translated the Gospel of John, but for decades that was all that linguistic group had and they were begging for more. We have numerous English translations of the entire Bible and they sit on shelves gathering dust. We have Bibles everywhere, in hotels, hospitals, homes, and yet they go unread and unappreciated. The Word is so rarely brought up in conversation for fear someone might be offended. When was the last time you heard someone say, "Jesus said in the Gospel of Mark that we are to..." I was so blessed when one of the young adults asked me, "What is God showing you today?" I hadn't had anyone ask me that in years. When was the last time you asked that of a brother or sister in Christ? Are we taking time to let God show us things in His Word?

There is a famine for hearing the Word of the Lord just as was predicted by the prophet Amos (Amos 8:11^{xxvii}), but it is not because it is not available. It is because we

are too preoccupied with the things of daily life. We don't take this command personally and set aside the time to hear from God.

Is this promise for us as well? If we as the body of Christ will speak of it always and meditate in it day and night would we not see our faith prosper and have success against our culture's decline? We pray for revival and repentance but then do we change our ways? What we need to make this happen is the same thing Joshua needed, to be strong and courageous to do it! There is no time to start like today.

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 Allow me to rephrase that verse. Has not God command us to be strong and bold? Do not be frightened of people or dismayed at their reactions, for Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit who are one is our God and will be with us wherever we go! And if God is with us then who can be against us (Romans 8:31^{xxviii})! Do we believe it? Belief is demonstrated by action. I can say I believe it, but if I do not act accordingly, it is just wishful thinking, an untried concept of which I am uncertain (James 1:6,7^{xxix}).

Like Joshua, we face what seems to be impossible odds. We can stay in the desert and live a meager spiritual life, or we can believe God and march into the spiritual promised land of life in Christ, believing God is with us and will give us victory. But that is only if we talk about the Word and meditate on it continually. Yes, we have the Holy Spirit to direct us, but the saints have discovered that His main directions come from the illumination of God's Word as we read and meditate on it. He brings the Scriptures to our minds in the situations we face. But if the Word is not hidden in our hearts, if our speech is always about politics or finances or temporal things, and we never take time to read and contemplate the application of God's Word, there is nothing in our memory from which the Spirit can draw to speak to us. Jesus told us that the Spirit reminds us of what He has already said (John 14:26^{xxx}). The Holy Spirit can teach us without the Word, but how will we know we are listening to the right voice if we do not take what we think we are hearing and check it with the Scriptures?

There are Christians who want the Holy Spirit to guide their every move, but they do not study the Word to know whether it is the Spirit speaking or their own inclinations. When they obey only to find chaos, they chalk it up to the Spirit doing something they do not understand. Well, that could be the case. But when it happens over and over, you would hope they would learn that it is not the Spirit they are listening to but their own inclinations. Zeal without a correct understanding of God's Word had the Apostle Paul killing Christians (Romans 10:2^{xxxi}). He needed the Spirit to interpret the Word.

Do you want to be prosperous and successful for the kingdom of God? Then you need to read, meditate, and speak the Word of God. The difference between us and Joshua is that we have the revelation of Jesus in the New Testament and the indwelling Holy Spirit is always with us because of what Jesus has done for us. But notice that **the LORD said He would be with Joshua wherever he went, and He still needed to devote himself to the Word of God.**

How much of God's spiritual blessings do you desire? Will you fulfill the destiny God has for you? Let us be strong and courageous and go for it all! This dark world is in desperate need of shining lights to let them know there is hope in Jesus, eternal life in Jesus, and more love than they can imagine in our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ!

Questions:

- 1 What would be different if they believed God's promise and acted on it?
- 2 What would be different in our lives if we believed and acted on God's promises?
- 3 Do you believe the quote from Pastor Jackman?
- 4 What made Moses special?
- 5 Which promises in verse 5 are for us today?
- 6 Why does it take a long time for some prayers to be answered?
- 7 Why should we obey Jesus' commands?
- 8 Why do we avoid listening in prayer?
- 9 Does verse 8 apply to us? How?
- 10 How do we discern the voice of God?

ⁱ **Genesis 15:18-21 (ESV)**

¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

ⁱⁱ **Numbers 34:3 (ESV)**

³ your south side shall be from the wilderness of Zin alongside Edom, and your southern border shall run from the end of the Salt Sea on the east.

ⁱⁱⁱ -Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose.

^{iv} **Hebrews 3:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

^v Jackman, David-Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose

^{vi} **Matthew 11:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

^{vii} **2 Peter 3:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

^{viii} **John 15:5 (ESV)**

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

^{ix} **Exodus 33:14-16 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵ And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

^x **Isaiah 8:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

^{xi} **John 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

^{xii} **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ 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."

^{xiii} **Romans 8:31 (ESV)**

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

^{xiv} **Matthew 28:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

^{xv} **Romans 8:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

^{xvi} **1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)**

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

^{xvii} **Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

^{xviii} **Genesis 50:5 (ESV)**

⁵ “My father made me swear, saying, “I am about to die: in my tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me.” Now therefore, let me please go up and bury my father. Then I will return.”

^{xix} **Romans 8:2-4 (ESV)**

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

^{xx} **Genesis 3:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

^{xxi} **1 Peter 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

^{xxii} **Colossians 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

^{xxiii} **Matthew 6:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

^{xxiv} **Matthew 16:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

^{xxv} **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ pray without ceasing,

^{xxvi} **Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV)**

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

^{xxvii} **Amos 8:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

^{xxviii} **Romans 8:31 (ESV)**

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

^{xxix} **James 1:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

^{xxx} **John 14:25-26 (ESV)**

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

^{xxxi} **Romans 10:2 (NIV)**

² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.