

Week 13 - March 30/31

Covenant, Conquest, and Control of the Land

Joshua 1

The REST of the Story

The late great Paul Harvey was famous for the phrase, “Now you know the REST of the Story.”

The past several weeks we have been studying the Exodus Era which was the story of God’s People, the Israelites’ time in the Wilderness. Moses was their leader, in fact, you will remember Moses lead the people out of slavery, out of bondage, out of Egypt with the hope and promise of the land of milk and honey which was declared to Abraham so many generations ago during the Patriarch Era. Today we are going to look at the Conquest Era.

You might remember that while in the wilderness for 40 years, there was grumbling, mumbling, bumbling and an altogether sense of “restlessness”. During those 40 years, Moses was the undisputed leader. God had called him, prepared him and used him over those years to communicate, challenge, and lead the people of God. Joshua served alongside Moses for those years. In today’s terms, Joshua would be considered the V.P. who was taking on leadership roles along the way.

At the age of 120 years old, Moses died. And Joshua became Moses’ successor. Joshua had been trained and was fully prepared to lead God’s people. This was a passing of the torch from one beloved leader to another.

As we look at the Conquest Era, the book of Joshua in many ways is “The REST of the Story” of the Exodus from Egypt; of the journey in the wilderness; entering the land of promise.

I have always enjoyed stories that capture my attention and don’t let go. I enjoy reading books that many would call “page turners”. The authors write in such a way that I want to keep turning the page to see what will happen. There is a sense of urgency, a sense of excitement, a sense of trepidation at times, but always a sense of “what’s going to happen next”.

Joshua is a "page-turner" in the slice of life. There is a sense of urgency; there is definitely a sense of excitement; there is definitely a sense of trepidation at times, and you will get a sense of “what’s going to happen next.”

So, let’s begin the “Rest of the Story” by looking at Joshua 1:1

Joshua 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: ² "Moses My servant is dead. Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all these people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. (*March 22nd, pg. 312-313*)

Moses served God faithfully for all those years, leading the people of God out of Egypt towards the Promised Land, but didn’t quite take possession of the Promised Land. But now the time has come for the “rest of the story”.

But to get to the “rest of the story” something must happen. You must TURN THE PAGE.

Joshua had to TURN THE PAGE.

Moses was faithful. Moses was strong. Moses was close to God. Moses saw God in the burning bush. Moses heard the voice of God. Moses saw the hand of God. Moses experienced the provision of God. Moses literally “glowed” after an encounter with God. Moses was God’s Man!

And Moses was dead! That was a fact to be remembered and not ignored. Moses was dead. However, God was still very much alive!

Joshua served alongside Moses faithfully. Joshua watched and listened to Moses for years. Joshua could have very easily put his trust in Moses. And when Moses died, Joshua’s trust and purpose could have died along with Moses.

However, Joshua’s trust, purpose, and identity were not in Moses. Joshua was first and foremost a follower of God! Joshua knew that to be a strong leader; he had to first be a strong follower. Joshua knew if he were to ever take up the torch and lead the people of God, he must first be a follower of God.

Joshua had to TURN THE PAGE.

Now “turning the page of life” is easier said than done. The past is the past, we all know it’s the past, but way too often we glamorize the past. We fool ourselves into imagining the “glory days” of the past were better, more exciting, and more satisfying.

We say that life was easier back then or life was more fun back then. We might think that life was more engaging or more purposeful back then. We can easily end up living in the past, rather than ‘turning the page’ and moving forward. It has been said, "*The past should be a springboard, not a hammock.*"

We can and should learn lessons from the past and use them as a springboard into the future; not as a hammock of just reliving, rehashing, and remaining in the past.

Joshua knew the time had come for him to step up and TURN THE PAGE.

God said to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead; it's time now for you to move on. Joshua, turn the page."

So ask yourself today,

- What page in my life needs to be turned?
- What part of the past am I hanging on to?
- In what ways do I allow yesterday to hold me back?"

Now it could be that you need to:

- Turn the Page of the story as it continues.
- Turn the Page for a brand new chapter of your life.
- Turn the Page for a new book
- Turn the Page because you have a new Author in Jesus Christ!

All of us have to remember the past. All of us need to learn from the past. All of us need to move forward beyond the past. All of us need to do exactly what Joshua did; turn the page toward the future.

Look again at vs. 2:

Joshua 1:2 “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. (*March 22nd, pg. 312-313*)

ARISE. CROSS this Jordan. TO THE LAND which I am giving to them.

It always takes action to turn the page. Look at the three steps.

1. ARISE: getting up out of the hammock, using the past as a springboard, rising up!!
2. CROSS: there is an obstacle, the Jordan River; we will always face obstacles in our life, we are to cross them, not avoid them.
3. TO THE LAND: there is the promise of the land. The gift of God. He has given it to us, made it available to us; but it is our responsibility to take it and live in it.

As we turn the page in life we ARISE from the past; CROSS over the obstacles; TO THE LAND God has provided. New life! New beginning! New opportunity! The land of milk and honey, which is the land of sustenance and abundance. (*the story of the crossing of the Jordan is in Joshua 3*)

Let’s continue with Joshua 1:3

Joshua 1: 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. ⁴From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. ⁵No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. (*March 22nd, pg. 313*)

I love the way God is so gentle but firm here. God knows this is a time of transition for Joshua. God knows that Joshua is "used to", "accustomed to" "comfortable with" the past. So God gives Joshua some gentle encouragement. “Just as I spoke to Moses; Just as I have been with Moses; Just as I led Moses., so I will be with you.”

God is saying “I am the same God as I was with Moses”. “Moses is dead; I am not!”

Many times, you will see in the Old Testament the phrase, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob". That is a reminder that it is the same God from generation to generation. Our study through the Bible chronologically reminds us of the consistency of God through the Creation Era, the Patriarch Era, the Exodus Era and now through the Conquest Era. Leaders change, circumstances change, surroundings change, but God stays the same!

For us today, God is saying “Just as I was with Moses; Just as I was with Joshua; Just as I was with Paul; Just as I was with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; I will be with you; I am the same God.”

Look at the gentleness of God but also the firmness of God.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you,

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

5 No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

God has given Joshua and the people of God “every place on which the sole of your foot treads”. It’s a gift! But God doesn’t force it on them. God doesn’t wrap it up in a box with a bow and hand it to them. But God makes it clear that it is there for them to take.

They have been in the wilderness for 40 years. Before that, they and their ancestors were slaves in Egypt. This was going to be a paradigm shift, a different way of thinking for them.

How often do we shortchange ourselves in the name of God? God wouldn’t want me to have that. God wouldn’t want me to be happy. God wouldn’t want me to find a spouse. God wouldn’t want me to be able to work only one job. God wouldn’t want me to have a different car or home.

We shortchange ourselves by limiting God. Joshua could’ve very easily had said, “God, I’m good”. “We know the wilderness, we have survived the wilderness, and we are good staying in the wilderness, but thanks anyway.”

God had given them so much more for the taking. And that’s just it; they would have to take action, which is what the book of Joshua is all about, the conquest and control of the land that was promised. Suffice it to say, that God provided the Promised Land for His people and they were to Arise, Cross and Take the Land!

And did you catch the actual Promise part? “I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.”

On this journey of life, God will always be with you. God will not fail you. God will not forsake you.

Now in our earthly minds, this is hard to understand, because we have all been in situations where people have broken their promises. People have abandoned us. People have failed us. People have forsaken us. People have let us down again and again.

But God promised Joshua as He promises us to always be with us. Honestly, if we try to hide from God, we can’t. If we try to trick God, we can’t. God is always with us; during the good, the bad and the ugly. God is always with us. God does not fail you nor forsake you.

But we know that the people in the days of Joshua felt abandoned by God at times during those 40 years in the wilderness. But God was always there with them.

Just because God is present doesn’t mean life will be happy, peaceful, easy and fun. But we can have confidence that God is with us during the times of plenty and the times of want.

Let’s continue with verse 6 as God is still speaking to Joshua.

Joshua 1: 6 " 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹Have 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.” (*March 22nd, pg. 313*)

Three times in these verses we see the command, not just the words, but the COMMAND.

Be Strong and of Good Courage (Courageous). Once, it even says, “very courageous”.

I want you to notice the “full circle” here from verses 5-9...

A I will be with you (v. 5).

B Be strong and courageous (vv. 6, 7).

C That you may have success (v. 7).

D This book of the law (v. 8).

E' Then you will have success (8).

B' Be strong and courageous (v. 9).

A' The Lord your God is with you (v. 9).

If you look at this “full circle” what is in the middle? It is the Book of the Law!

God’s Word is the “centerpiece”

1. I will be with you....need convincing? Look at the Word of God
2. Be Strong and Courageous... need convincing? Look at the Word of God
3. That you may have success.... need convincing? Look at the Word of God

One of the great things about this church is that it is grounded in the Bible, not Dr. Young, not one of the teaching pastors, not any one person or group of people; everything we do is based on the Word of God. You may or may not know that in the worship center the stained-glass ceiling right about the platform, is actually the 66 books of the Bible. (If you have one of the chronological bibles, the cover design is based on that stained glass). Dr. Young wanted to be constantly reminded that whether it was him or whoever stood on that platform to speak, preach, sing, pray, dance, it was under the authority of the Word of God.

God’s Word is the centerpiece of our lives. If you want to be reminded of the power of God’s Word, read Psalm 119.

Psalm 119: 11, “Thy word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against you oh Lord”

Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Psalm 119:160, “The sum of Thy word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting”

So, the centerpiece is the Word of God; but three times we see the command, “Be Strong and Courageous.

I started thinking about what it meant to be Strong...and I admit I like acrostics, so I developed one based on Joshua 1 for the word...the concept of being Strong!

S.... SURRENDER

In verse 2 we saw that Joshua had to surrender to God. Remember a great leader is always a great follower. Joshua had to surrender/ submit to the Leadership of God. Moses was dead. God was alive and worthy to be followed.

T.... TRUST

In verse 5 it said that ‘no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life’ God was with Moses.... God will be with Joshua. There had to be TRUST that God would continue what He started. TRUST that God would provide. TRUST that God would lead. TRUST that God would protect. TRUST that God would deliver.

R.... REPETITION

I thought about using Rise Up for this one but landed on Repetition. If you want to be physically strong, you have to work out in repetitions. Now obviously by just looking at me, you can tell that I work out a lot. Maybe not as much as I should, but I have seen others do it! And the key is not just to lift weights one time and stop, but the muscle is built up because of repetition. Doing curls over and over again. Doing bench press over and over again. Doing “curls” “bench press” over and over again. It’s the repetition that builds strength and of course the weight. You have to challenge yourself with more weight to build more strength.

To be spiritually strong we have to do the same thing. We can't just go to church one time and stop...we need that repetition. We can't just go to bible study one time, and stop....we need that repetition. We can't just read that verse one time, and stop.....we need that repetition. We can't just pray that prayer one time, and stop....we need that repetition. That’s how we get strong in the Lord.

O.... OBEY

Vs. 7 talks about being careful to do according to all the law which Moses commanded you, do not turn to the right or to the left. In traffic, we have laws to obey. We have lanes to be in, we have signal lights to follow, we have signs that tell us when to stop or yield. The Word of God gives us direction on how to live life, but it is up to us to “obey” those instructions...to follow those directions. It takes Obedience. Joshua had seen the scenarios of when people obeyed God and had seen the scenarios of when people chose NOT to obey God. Obedience always ended up being the better choice.

N.... NUTRITION

Vs. 8, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night....” You’ve heard the saying “garbage in...garbage out”. Well, we are to put God’s Word in our heart, in our mind, in our soul, in our mouth. Just like our bodies need nutrients to be strong and healthy, the way God intended for our bodies to function. Spiritually we need His Word to be our “nutrition”. His Will to be our food.

One of my favorite verses is in John 4:34 “Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work”.

God's Word is our food and nutrition. Our "food" should be to do the will of God and accomplish His work.

G.... GO

Very simply...GO.... It's ACTION TIME!

Vs. 2 talks about ARISE, CROSS...TO THE LAND....sum it up...GO! And as you GO...remember this....

7 "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you **go**."

9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you **go**."

That is just a quick picture of some things to consider when you hear God telling to you be STRONG.

Surrender....Trust....Repetition...Obey....Nutrition....Go

Now verses 10-15 is Joshua stepping up as the Leader that God had prepared him to be. Joshua gives instructions and encouragement along the way.

If you read those verses, you will see that Joshua takes nothing away from what Moses did or said. In fact, he very clearly builds on what Moses did and said, challenging them and reminding them of God's promise and God's faithfulness.

And the people respond to their newly established leader in verse 16 and following.

Joshua 1: 16 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage." (*March 22nd, pg. 313*)

The page has been turned. The story continues. The REST of the Story becomes a story of REST; resting in God's purpose, plan, and promise.

Just as Joshua was committed to following God and leading the people, the people, in turn, were committed to following Joshua to the point of encouraging him with words he had heard before.

Be Strong and Courageous. Joshua heard it from God, whom he was following as well as from the people whom he was leading.

That is our challenge even today, to live a life that is Strong and Courageous in the Lord. It begins by turning the page, letting the past be the past and rising up to move towards the future as God leads.

The book of Joshua is a book of conquest, but not without challenges. It is also a book of God fulfilling His promise that He made to Abraham during the Patriarch Era well over 400 years before.

The page had been turned by being strong and courageous in the Lord.