

“ONLY BE THOU STRONG AND OF A GOOD COURAGE”

As we look at and read the Book of Joshua, we must keep in mind that it is the continuation of God miraculously working in the lives of the Hebrew people as they were being freed from the bondage of Egypt. Egypt represents the sin filled life of an individual before salvation.

They came out from Egypt where they were in captivity for 400 years. They were then freed from the Egyptians by the miraculous move of God. It was brought to a conclusion by the death of the first born of all the Egyptians that were not covered by the striking of the blood of the lamb upon the doorposts of their homes as the Hebrew people were told by God to do.

After the Hebrews left Egypt and were miraculously saved through the “Red Sea experience” they wandered through the desert for 40 years. We know that the generation that was freed from the captivity of Egypt, which included Moses himself, would not be able to enter the Promised Land because of their sin - no one except Joshua and Caleb.

As we go into the Book of Joshua we see the Hebrews getting ready to enter the Promised Land. This points us to something very important. The entire story found in Joshua, was a precursor to the life and work of Jesus and all that He did while He was on the earth and more importantly, what He did for us by taking the cross for us all and what He did after the cross.

We know that Joshua’s name was changed by Moses (ultimately it was changed by God) back in Numbers 13:16. It was originally “Oshea” which meant “salvation.” Moses changed his name to “Yeshua” or as we say “Joshua” which meant “**God is our** salvation.” Yeshua, or the name Joshua, is the Jewish form of the word that we now use, which is the Greek word – Jesus. In other words we can say the “Joshua” (Yeshua) is a “type,” he represents the work of the true Messiah - Jesus.

Of course Joshua was not the Son of God. His life just represents and is an example of what the true Messiah would do on this earth. Ultimately, Jesus brings us into the **fullness** of what our salvation is and will be. Joshua simply represents in a symbolic way what Jesus would ultimately do when He was upon the earth and ultimately bring into us into the fullness of life, which is our salvation unto God.

Unfortunately, because Joshua is not the actual Son of God, he can never, nor could he ever, live his life or be the fullness of which the actual Son of God truly was and is. As mentioned previously, he is a “type” or the example of Jesus who was - the only One who actually could and actually did redeem us all when He died on that cross, rose again from the dead and was seated at the right hand of the Father.

When the Hebrews finally crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, Moses was not leading them nor was he with them. He died in the mountains on the other side of the Jordan River. Instead, we see that it was Joshua, a type of Jesus, who was to lead them as they would enter and dwell in the Promised Land. We must take note that Moses could only lead the people so far. As we know, Moses represented the Law.

This reveals that the Law, on its own, can only bring us so far. It cannot bring us to true salvation. This is where we see that the Pentateuch (the Law) ends and where Joshua begins. However, we read very clearly in the beginning of the Book of Joshua that God **never** tells Joshua or the people to forget about the Law nor did He ever tell them to cast it aside. No, it was to be with them forever.

We know that the Hebrews while in the desert did not obey nor did they truly keep the Law. For that reason none of them, including Moses, was allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Now, the only way the new generation of true believers would be able to enter into this Promised Land was to be led by the one who is called Joshua or Yeshua, in the Hebrew – a type of Jesus.

The Law was what guided the people but it could never bring them into total forgiveness for all their sin. It could never bring them back into a full relationship with their God. This was because they could never keep the Law on their own. They were all just plain and simple – sinful people, just as we all are in today world and in our own lives.

If we read through the Bible, we know that the next generation of Hebrews who did enter, under Joshua's leadership, into the Promised Land actually never finished what they started. We know through history and through the Bible that they had continuous difficulties while in the "Promised Land." We know this because the Hebrew people were not the "true believers" and neither was the land of Israel the true "Promised Land." Joshua would not be the true Messiah to lead the people into the true "Promised Land."

They were all "types" of the true "Messiah" and true "Promised Land" that were still to come. Everything we read of in the Old Testament is just a precursor to what will be true salvation that will come by the true Messiah, Jesus. The true "Promised Land" will not simply be a place on this earth, nor will it be a place called "heaven." Ultimately, it will be the "New Jerusalem" (Revelation 20) where all the true believers will spend eternity with our God.

If we read the New Testament we see that salvation now is available only through the blood of the spotless Lamb of God – Jesus. We see this in the Gospel accounts which reveal to us the true Messiah. Jesus was not a "type" or representative of the Messiah. No, He was and is the true Messiah. We see all the writings in the New Testament by Paul, John, Peter, James, etc. These writings all point us in the true direction and the correct way to live as true believers in the true Messiah - Jesus.

However, we see that there is one Book that is left to still be fulfilled. That is the Book of Revelation which tells us all about the conclusion of this life on earth. The Book of Revelation reveals to us all that will take place at the culmination of history. We read of this in Revelation 20 and 21. It tells us who the true people of God are and it tells us where they will spend eternity - with God, forever and ever and ever. It also tells us where all the people who ever lived and who had rejected the true and living God will ultimately spend their eternity. They will spend it in the Lake of Fire.

I mentioned all of the above to bring us back to Joshua 1. In Joshua 1:7-8 we read, *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou may prosper whithersoever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success."*

As we read in this passage of scripture, God's command to Joshua was to be strong and to be very courageous. He actually, commands Joshua to be strong and to be courageous or to have courage three times in verses 6-9. However, in the verses above we get a very good indication of just how Joshua and the people were to be strong and how they were to be very courageous and have great courage. They were to have the courage and to be strong by observing to do **all the law**.

Wow!!! Did you hear what God told Joshua? He told him flat out – observe and do all the Law. In verse 8 God tells Joshua that every word of the Law should not depart from his mouth and that He should dwell on and meditate on God's Word – day and night. And not only that, but that Joshua should do **ALL** that is written within the Word of God. By the way, the Word in which God is referring to is the Word of God found in the Pentateuch.

We must remember that the Book of Joshua refers to our time that we are living in today. Joshua is encouraged and actually he is told, to always keep the Word of God in front of him. That is what every child of God must do. If we look in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life we see that Jesus always used the Word of God that we still find in our "Old Testament scriptures" today. Joshua was told to be strong and courageous. He was told that the only way to accomplish that was to keep his mind on, and continually speak forth, God's Word - in every situation.

The only thing that we never see Jesus do from the Pentateuch are the sacrifices that the people are told to do. This was, of course, because Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God. He never needed to do any of the animal sacrifices or any other sacrifice to be cleansed from sin. This was because Jesus was absolutely, positively sinless. There was no need for Him to do any part of the sacrificial system. What He did do was that He continually lived out, spoke out and revealed the power that was and is found in the "moral aspects" of the Law.

It is the moral aspects of the Law that we are to continually live out in our lives in this hour. These are things such as the Ten Commandments which are broken down into two main categories – loving God and loving others. This is what we are to continually be "strong and courageous" in. This is what will give us success as children of the most High God within our lives. However, we can only do this through having a renewed spirit which is only made possible through receiving and believing in Jesus and all that He did.

In Joshua chapter one, we hear God tell Joshua three times to be very strong and to take courage. We see that the only way that God encouraged Joshua to do this was through the Word of God. He tells Joshua to be strong and courageous in taking, receiving and then acting upon the moral aspects of the Law. That is where our success in living the Godly lifestyle is found.

Yes, in Jesus, we have a born again spirit that is now alive to God. He has also given us His Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. However, we also have His Word – the moral aspects of the Law that are there to lead and guide us throughout our lives. The Holy Spirit will bring all of those moral aspects to our attention as we go forward in our lives. The Holy Spirit would never and will never do anything to cause the true believer in Christ to do anything contrary to or outside of the moral aspects of the Law.

As we read what God told Joshua we read, *"...be strong and of a good courage..."* What does that mean? Well, to be "strong" comes from the Hebrew word, "châzaq" (khaw-zak'). It means - to fasten upon; to fortify; to be stout and to harden; to behave valiantly; to stay and withstand. To be of "a good courage" comes from the Hebrew word, 'âmats, (aw-mats'). This means – "to be alert, physically (on foot) or mentally (in courage); confirm, be steadfastly minded, strong, stronger, establish, fortify, harden, increase, prevail, strengthen.

What it is literally stating to us is that we must be fastened upon and to valiantly stay alert and fortified by and in God's Word. Yes, it is the Word of God that will strengthen and fortify the true believer in this hour and in the times to come. It is only God's pure and unadulterated Word – from Genesis to Revelation – that will truly strengthen an individual and cause them to be valiant in the troubling times that lay ahead.

God tell us that, just as He was with Moses, just as He was with Joshua, just as He was with all of the great men and women we read of throughout the Bible, that He will be with us and that He will never leave us. He tells Joshua, as well as every true believer today, in Joshua 1:5, that just as He was with Moses, *"...I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."*

God promises the true believer in this hour that He will be with you; He will not fail you and He will never forsake you. This is vital for us as true believers today to grab a hold onto. Many things are “in the air” today concerning God. Many people are saying many things about our God and that His ways have changed. No matter what others may be saying, we have something that is timeless and most of all sure – God’s Word and His promises. Most of all we have God, Himself – the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Let’s read Joshua 1:6-9 in its fullness and truly grasp what it is not only telling us but what it is promising us. *“Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou may prosper whithersoever thou goes. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success. ⁹ Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou go.”*

God tells Joshua three times that he is to “be strong and of a good courage (be courageous).” Three times He tells us this. We know that when God repeats Himself it is in the Hebrew understanding that He is not simply stating something three times. In Hebrew understanding it means that it is being repeated exponentially. If it is stated three times it is referring to the fact that God is stating something to the third power. This means therefore, that God is telling Joshua and ultimately the reader, 1000 times, to “be strong and of a good courage (be courageous).”

We know that the Hebrew’s conquest of Canaan represents the believer entering into the new life God gives through accepting Jesus for who He is. We are to conquer the “giants” of the flesh that have been entrenched so long in our lives. We must remember that in Joshua we read that he could only lead them so far. He led them into the conquering of the land but he never brought them into an everlasting rest. Only the true Messiah, Jesus, can lead us into true rest.

What we learn from Joshua and the rest of the Old Testament is that even though it leads and points us in the right direction there is only One who can truly give us, not only the “Promised Land” but He can give us eternal life and “true rest.” That is where Jesus is greater than anyone else in the Bible – Old or New Testament. Only Jesus can give us eternal life and that true resting place that only comes through and in our God. This all comes now into our life when we believe and accept Jesus into our heart.

However, the greater rest, or I should say the greatest rest, is when we are with the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit at that time when together we will see everything pass away and we will behold and be allowed to enter into the “New Jerusalem.” (Revelation 20) In this “New Jerusalem” there will only be God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that will be the center of everything. All His people will then forever and ever be in His midst worshipping Him and enjoying eternity and true rest – forever.

The ability to “be strong and of a good courage” allows us to enter into the resting place of our God. However, as we stated, it is still only the preliminary to what lies ahead for all the true believers who stay faithful through it all to the very end. Those that remain faithful to the end will enter into that **“true resting place of the living God.”** We will hear Him say to us, *“...Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter into the joy of your Lord.”* (Matthew 25:23)

I encourage all of the true believers in Christ to truly heed the command of the Lord as He declares in Joshua 1:9, *“...Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou go.”*