

This newsletter finds us at the book of Joshua. What a powerful story of an experience that we can relate to for today, right now.

Setting things up a little, the children of Israel having been brought out of the bondage of Egypt and having rebelled against God are now some 40 years later standing at the threshold of the "Promise Land". Sin has kept their parents from this moment, but now they stand, filled with excitement and at the same time perhaps anxious, or a little fearful of the unknown that lies ahead of them. A place they have not been before finds them at a very epic moment in their lives. The fulfillment of the cry of their bondage that was over 400 years old.

Moses my servant is dead says the Lord to Joshua, arise and cross over Jordan into the promise land you and all the people. We find the pastor of

part of this 8th verse. The time of mourning had ended!

More importantly, in this end time we so often cling to the old, the way we have always done things, the way we like it to be. How many times have we said, I wish things were like they used to be in the good old days? We are actually mourning over the past. Paul said it best in Philippians 3:14, *this one thing I do, forgetting the past, I press toward the high calling in Christ Jesus.* We must forget the past both the good and the bad to be able to flow and enjoy the new. Each new move of God builds upon the last and moves forward. It is very important that we do not mourn the past keeping us from stepping into the new things of God. We are already into a time, a season, a manifestation of God's power of which we have not seen, and it will increase even more. Truly, it is a place where no man has gone before.

Joshua had two very important things we need. Joshua had the Word of the Lord and he had the anointing.

Deuteronomy 31:7 finds Moses telling Joshua that he would lead the people into the promise land and divide the inheritance.

In Deuteronomy 34:9 we find Moses laying his hands on Joshua and imparting the anointing for the job ahead.

The Word of God and the anointing; do we have them? YES! First, the Bible is the, "Word of the Lord". To know the Word of the Lord you must read the book. Next when you received Jesus as your Savior you received the anointing on the inside of you. I John 2:15 tells us *the anointing which we have received abides within us.* Jesus said *I will never leave nor forsake you.* If Jesus is in you, so is the anointing. Christ means the "anointed one" and His anointing. We are equipped just like

Joshua to do what lies ahead of us. Glory be to God!

Joshua and the children of Israel were moving into a land of prosperity that they had never experienced. It was also a land with a spiritual climate that would bring many challenges. What about us this day, this time? We are in a time we have never been before. God is moving in ways we have never seen before. He is calling on us to walk and obey in ways that are new and different.

His power is being demonstrated before our very eyes with miracles and wonders we have never seen. Our services, our programs, our sermons, our music, and everything must be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We say we are ready, but are we? Can we be obedient when the time comes to move into these new things? Is our faith and trust; our strength and courage ready for the task?

What did God tell Joshua four times in this first chapter? Be strong and of good courage. I do not know if Joshua had a problem with fear or weakness or if maybe God was just emphasizing what was needed for the task at hand. Either way we need to heed this admonishment and be strong and of good courage. What is it to be strong and of good courage.

- To be strong is to prevail, be firm, be secure, be mighty and be endowed with strength.
- To be of good courage is to face fear with confidence and resolution, be brave, having backbone and boldness.

We find Joshua giving specific instructions from God to the people. Joshua 3:3 says,

- *When you see the ark move follow it.*

The ark carried for one thing the Ten Commandments that Moses received on Mount Sinai. It demanded reverence and respect. In verse 4 the instructions continue.

- *Keep 2000 cubits between you and the ark so you will know the way to go, for you have not passed this way before.*

**You have not
PASSED this
way before!**

this great church has passed away and his assistant has been given the responsibility to take the people forward into the promise land and to divide the inheritance unto them. An important transition time for both Joshua and the people.

The unknown brought the opportunity for fear and apprehension for Joshua and Israel. This unknown or unfamiliar causes us to want to hold tight to our comfort zones. We can become resistant to the new ways God is introducing in this season.

In Deuteronomy 34:8 we find that the people had mourned for Moses for 30 days. Look carefully at the last

Historically the 2000 cubits was the distance they kept their tents from the ark when they were camped. In the New Testament we find this distance called a, “Sabbath days journey” a distance of less than 1/2 a mile. This was the distance they could travel and still keep the law of the Sabbath.

The instructions continue in Joshua 3:6 when God says:

• *Sanctify yourselves.*

What does it mean to sanctify yourself? Sanctify simply means:

- to separate yourself unto God, to set apart, to consecrate, be sacred.

We find it aptly described in II Corinthians 6:17, *come out from among them and be ye separate.* I Peter 1:15,16 says it a little stronger, *be ye holy as I am holy.* Not merely a suggestion but a way of life God requires of His kids.

We must interject the thought of the absolute faith and trust these people had in the promise of God. The priests were to pick up the ark and head for the Jordan River and keep walking regardless. Look what happened, when the tip of their toes touched the water it stood up in a heap on either side and the priests with the ark stood in the middle of the river on dry ground as all the people crossed over.

A very interesting thing reveals itself about crossing another river on dry ground. Remember the crossing at the Red Sea and the Egyptians being drowned as the water closed behind Israel. God made the declaration that *this day will you see your enemies no more.* (Exodus 13:14) These were the enemies from behind (the past). The closing of the Red Sea was a prophetic statement that the past was gone and sealed from them forever by the power of God. Now we find them at the Jordan and the same declaration is made in Joshua 3:10,11 that, *by this dividing of the waters God would drive out from before them all their enemies.* (the future) These two crossings form a picture of our salvation from the past and our salvation for the future. Equally stated the closing of the Jordan River was the prophetic statement that they were now sealed from the wilderness and sealed to the future in God.

What God says in verse 11 of chapter 3 is powerful. *The Ark of the Covenant of the earth is going before you.* Think about this statement, not just for this moment, but for the whole earth, for all mankind, for all ages the promise that God has taken care of the past and goes before to take care of our future. Blessed be the name of the Lord forever and ever. The hope we have in God is so strongly recorded in scriptures. We find one such reference in Romans 15:4. God is a GOOD God.

It is important that we note they did exactly as God had instructed and they crossed over into the Promised Land. God was already working at driving out the enemies if you look back in Joshua chapter 2:9,10 you find the fear of Israel was already in the people of the land before Israel ever crossed the Jordan. God is faithful to do what He promised.

Before we close this example of God's using of Joshua and the relevancy to us today. We must look at the first thing they experienced in the promise land. We find a very enormous victory over Jericho which is recorded in Joshua 6:1. Again very specific instructions were given to march around the city 1 time each day for 6 days with their mouths shut. Then on the 7th day march 7 times and on the last time shout and blow the trumpets and the walls would come down. Historical accounts relate the walls of Jericho went straight down into the ground they didn't just fall over in a pile of rubble. What a victory and miracle of God. They took the city but were not to take anything from this city. For everything in it was accounted accursed unto God. After such a great victory it is hard to imagine the next thing that transpires.

We find their plight in Joshua 7:1. Achan when he saw (Joshua 7:21) a Babylonian garment and some silver and gold he coveted them. He took them and hid them in his tent. Now you would think this act, even though a sin, would not be a major problem. But notice what God said in Joshua 7:1, the last part of the verse, “*so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel*”. This act of Achan caused God's anger to be against the whole nation. How important it is that we realize the sin of one can

place a curse on a whole nation. Knowing this we can see why America is in its current condition. Our sin can cause us to lose the victory right where we live. God's children need to repent and humble themselves before Him. It is time for us to turn from our wicked ways so God can heal our land.

Reading the rest of chapter 7 we find that only when they had annihilated the sin did they return to the path of the favor of God. Joshua 8:1 finds God's promise in action as He says, go up for I have given the enemy into your hands.

As Christians, the times we live in dictate our obedience, our faith and trust must emphatically be in God and His Word. When Joshua and the people obeyed God victory and success was there. When the sin of disobedience was there, trouble was in the camp and the enemy overcame them.

Obedying God's specific instructions will bring prosperity and victory into every avenue of our lives. Then and only then can we go where no man has gone before with confidence and boldness knowing whose we are and whom we serve. Joshua himself in chapter 24:15 wraps up this story with his unashamed declaration that, “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord”!

May we truly move into the new things of God with no strings of the past. God bless each of you. God loves you and so do we.

Pastors Steve & Cathy Akers

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