

The Leader we need

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Date: 30 November 2016

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[0 : 0 0] In the short time that we have together, we're going to be looking at Joshua chapter 1, which is on page 178 of the church Bibles you have on your seats. But before we read, I will pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you give us this opportunity to come and sit under your words. Thank you that as we hear it, we hear your voice speaking clearly to us.

So we ask that you would be with us now. Give us greater faith in you and your promises. In Jesus' name, amen. So Joshua chapter 1, we're going to be looking at the first nine verses.

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. 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.

[1 : 2 6] 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.

Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 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. 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. 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. Well, leaders play a very important role in modern life. They are the ones that we put our hope in.

[2 : 3 6] They are the ones who often let us down. And they make decisions that often affect our lives for good or bad. But often the importance of a leader is only realized when they are gone.

I don't know if you have seen in October the king of Thailand, who was at that time the longest reigning monarch in the world, he died in October. And the country declared a whole year of mourning.

He was a much loved leader. And I don't know if you saw any of the pictures of the people weeping over his passing. But he brought stability to that country, even during recent political turmoil.

And many are now wondering what the future will hold. Or think about leaders in the business world. When Steve Jobs, the CEO and founder of Apple, died a few years ago, company shares plummeted.

And many wondered what the future would hold for them. Or think about leaders in the world of sports. The great Scots, Sir Alex Ferguson, led Man United for 20 years.

[3 : 47] And he retired a few years back. And they haven't quite recovered since. You see, the passing of a leader, or the end of a leader's reign, can cause great uncertainty about the future.

And that's what we have here at the beginning of Joshua. Verse 1, we see Moses has died. The people of Israel are on the brink of the promised land.

They can see it across the Jordan. They're so near. And God had raised Moses up to lead them all the way to this point. God's promise, he made 400 years earlier, of a land for his people was about to be realized.

But what would happen now? Would they make it? Moses was an important leader. He had led God's people out of Egypt. He had received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

And he had pleaded with God to continue with the people after their disobedience. But what would happen now that he was gone? Would God keep his promises to his people?

[4 : 53] And that's a big question for us as Christians today too. Will God keep his promises to his people? We see in the New Testament wonderful promises about a future inheritance for us in the new creation.

But are you sure you're going to make it? Or do you live life with all fingers and toes crossed? Maybe you're beginning to think that it's just wishful thinking. There's no better world to come, so just make the best of it now.

Well, I hope that these verses here in Joshua will give us great confidence this afternoon as we look at them. So we're going to look at the passage under three headings. So first of all, we're going to see God is the promise-keeping God.

We see here in these opening verses that the Lord has been preparing a replacement leader for Moses. And he speaks to Moses' assistant, Joshua, you take command of my people.

This isn't some just knee-jerk choice. No, Joshua has been earmarked for leadership before now. He was Moses' right-hand man. He had been a great military leader in Israel, and he showed great faith in God.

[6 : 07] He's the man for the job. So after the death of Moses, the Lord turns to Joshua. Go lead my people into the promised land.

The Lord's promises here do not fall flat just because Moses is dead. No, it would happen just as he promised to Moses for Joshua. The promise of the land still stands, even though circumstances have changed.

God's promises haven't. And Joshua would have taken great comfort from this. The Lord will not go back on his promises. And we see the Lord's commitment to his promises even more in the next few verses.

The Lord will give his people the land. He assures Joshua of this. It would be a cruel joke for him to turn back on his promises now, and he doesn't.

And this is incredible in itself. The people of Israel have been grumbling and half-hearted for 40 years, but God still wants to show his kindness to his people. And he's going to give it to them.

[7 : 10] It was going to be a gift from him. The people want to take matters into their own hands. No, the Lord would give it. That's why it's an inheritance. You don't earn an inheritance.

You get given it. And what an inheritance it is for them. We hardly even have to know the geography in verse 4 of the River Euphrates, or the land of the Hittites, to see how incredible this gift will be.

We have this wonderful phrase at the end of verse 4, Toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. As far as the eye can see, it's all yours.

And the Lord commands Joshua, you and all those people, go take what is yours. You have to step out in faith in God's promises, because he will give it. And as we go into the New Testament, we see the promises of God just magnified to breathtaking heights.

The Christian hope is not just a strip of land in the Middle East. No, the Christian hope is the new creation, the new heavens, and the new earth, where we will be with God forever.

[8 : 17] Through Jesus' resurrection, this is a living hope. We read in 1 Peter that our inheritance is being kept for us. It's ours, and we will enjoy it one day.

But are these promises too good to be believed? Well, no. God keeps his promises. We see this even as you read through the book of Joshua. Go to chapter 21, and you see that all of God's promises come to pass.

The people find rest in the land. God has been faithful. And throughout the Bible, we see God making promises and keeping them.

He has a 100% track record of keeping his promises. And he's not going to let his perfect record be tarnished now. He cannot change his mind.

He makes promises that he will keep. We're used to other people letting us down, people going back on their promises, and we do that ourselves. But God will not.

[9 : 17] He keeps them because he wants his people to enjoy them. We must continue to look forward in faith, knowing that God will give them to us. Maybe you're tempted to give it all up.

Maybe you've known friends who have deserted the faith and wonder if you will too. That might be the easy thing to do. Pack it all in. Hope only in this life now.

Or maybe you're discouraged because life just doesn't seem to be going to plan. And that can make us doubt God's good promises. But the difficulties that we face in this life, whether through death of a loved one, struggle with health, struggle with sin, will it should make us long for the new creation where all will be perfect.

Let the thought of God's sure and certain promises encourage you this afternoon and keep hoping in him, the promise-keeping God. God. He keeps his promises and we see here how he's going to keep his promises.

So secondly, we have a victorious leader through whom we will inherit them. See, the Lord was going to keep his promise to Israel, but he was going to do it through his leader, Joshua.

[10 : 32] Look at verse 6. He says, Joshua was going to be the one who would deliver God's promises.

Joshua had proved himself as a mighty military leader for Israel, but even he knew the dangers that awaited them on the other side of the Jordan. And he would have felt the responsibility of the task that he had been given.

The Lord commands him here, be bold and courageous. God isn't just telling him to man up here, put on your big boy, Tuna. You've got work to do. No, he commands Joshua, but he gives him a promise.

He says in verse 5, No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. You see, the people of Israel had this tricky task of crossing the Jordan.

But they wouldn't be out of the woods once they made a cross. The land was full of enemies. Many battles would need to be won before they would enjoy rest in the land.

[11 : 43] But God promises Joshua victory. And the Lord also promises to go with him. Again, verse 5. He says, I will not leave you or forsake you.

The Lord would be the one giving victory to his leader. Making him victorious. But he would be with him every step of the way. As you read through the rest of the book, that is what we see.

The Lord gives him the victory. Joshua would be a victorious leader. And God's promises today come to us through a victorious leader.

The Lord Jesus. He was the one appointed, raised up by God to come and deal with our great enemies. Sin, death and Satan. See, on the cross when Jesus died, he bore the punishment for our sin.

On the cross he disarmed Satan and his evil. And he rose again to new life so that death would not be the end for his people.

[12 : 47] He has the victory. Nothing could stand in his way. Now we don't have much faith in our leaders to deliver on their promises. Not in the current political climate anyway.

Trump has promised to make America great again. And time will tell if he will. But we don't need to wait to see if God delivers on his promises. Because in Christ, he already has.

He has dealt the fatal blow to our enemies. And Christ is going to return victorious to finish the job someday. But as we look forward and hope, there are many dangers that threaten us in this life.

Many battles that might need to be overcome. The devil would love to make shipwreck off your face now. Maybe your sons and daughters would love you to give up on your Christian faith.

Your boss would love you to compromise at work for the good of the company. Maybe you worry about the future for Christians in this country. Christianity is becoming more and more marginalized.

[13 : 55] But Romans 8 says this, In all these things we are more than conquerors. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

You see, in Christ we are on the winning side. And that shouldn't make us fear these battles that we face in life.

No, this should make us bold and courageous. This command to be bold is a command for us too. Because the Lord will never leave us or forsake us.

We get echoes of this in Jesus' words in the Gospels at the end of Matthew when he says, And behold, I am with you to the end of the age. He has the victory and he has promised to be with his people always.

It can be easy to get a bit defeatist as a Christian. And everyone's against us. But Christ goes with us. He will never leave you. So be confident because if you're a victorious leader, be bold in standing for him and in living for him.

[15 : 07] Christ has the victory and he will lead us home. But finally from these verses, we learn something else about what kind of leader we need. We need a faithful leader and we need to follow a faithful leader.

Look at me at verses 7 and 8. God has commanded Joshua to be bold in battle. But he must also be bold in obedience. He's to be careful to do according to all of the law, all the whole law of God.

He's not to turn from it to the right hand or to the left. He's to obey everything that God has commanded. Only then would he have success.

At the end of Deuteronomy, we see that Moses, even though a great leader, he disobeyed God. And he didn't get to enjoy the land.

It would take a perfectly faithful leader if the people were to make it. Joshua was now this nation's spiritual leader. He was to teach the people to be obedient to God's law.

[16 : 15] They weren't going into the land to live as they please. They were going to live in the place that God was giving them to live under his rule. And only then would they enjoy the blessings.

And the leader was to set the tone. He was to be the one who led faithfully and taught the people to be obedient. The people were to follow their leader.

We see, if you just look over to verse 17 of chapter 1. This is the people talking. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. The people commit to following him.

Only by following their faithful leader would they inherit the land. Joshua was faithful even when others were not. And only by following him will they enjoy the rest in the land.

And we too need to follow our faithful leader and continue to follow him if we are to enjoy the blessings of heaven. God has raised up Jesus to be our faithful leader.

[17 : 20] He is one who lived in total submission to the will of God. He perfectly obeyed God's law. And his obedience led him all away to death on a Roman cross.

And because of his perfect obedience, God has given him his inheritance, the world. Jesus now reigns over creation and will reign over the new creation.

And we will enjoy it with him if we continue to follow him. So don't give up on Jesus. Have you felt yourself drifting from him? Are you tempted to give up?

Only by following him will you make it. He's the only way. He will bring you safely into your inheritance. Maybe you aren't a Christian here today and you think death is just the end of the road.

Well, Jesus has a different answer. If you follow him, you can enjoy eternal life. So this should all give us great confidence as we look ahead.

[18 : 25] And as we live now, God's promises are certain. Christ has the victory. He is our faithful leader. And with him as your leader, your future is certain.

With him, God's promises cannot fail. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are the promise-keeping God.

We thank you that we've seen that in Joshua today. We thank you that you've raised up a leader who is victorious over all our enemies. And we thank you for Christ and his faithfulness.

We thank you that where he is now, enjoying his inheritance in glory, we will also be one day. So please encourage us with this word today.

In Jesus' name. Amen.