

Joshua 1:1-9; II Cor. 10:1-6; Be Strong and Courageous I. God's Promised Presence II. Our Solemn Responsibility III. The Prosperous Outcome

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, starting off on the right foot is always important. Whether you are beginning a new school year, your new job or getting married; it is wise to start off well to set a good trajectory. This evening we begin to consider the book of Joshua- and we find that Joshua is going to receive the mantle of leadership from Moses. Moses has been the predominate human figure in the previous books of the Bible- as they are called the 5 books of Moses. But now- at the edge of the Promised Land- at 80 years of age- Joshua is being placed in a position of great importance. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, he is going to lead this massive group of former slaves and shepherds across the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan. This will be Joshua's second time in the land- he has already spied out the land back in Numbers 13. What we will find in this the narrative of Joshua and Israel is really a picture of what God does in the church through Jesus Christ. Indeed- Joshua is the OT version of Jesus- and Joshua could only lead if he was following the great commander of God's army. On the edge of the Promised Land- ready to receive the rest and inheritance promised to Abraham all those years ago- Joshua leads God's people forth. We will consider this theme: God's servant is commissioned to lead God's people into the Promised Land. Now this book is not going to be politically correct- there is a lot of bloodshed and death in the pages to come. But remember that the land of Canaan belongs to the LORD- and as such, the LORD is keeping His promise made to Abraham. This land will be given as a possession to the people of Israel.

I. God's Promised Presence

We begin, then, by looking at God's promised presence. How will Joshua be able to be strong and courageous- how can he lead a people as vast and rebellious as these? How can these grasshoppers stand up in a land of giants? Only when he would look to the promises that God makes in v. 5 and 9. I will be with you- I will not leave you nor forsake you; and again -the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. This promise is particularly instructive when we remember what had happened only a generation ago. When Moses was commissioned to lead the people- he had pleaded with the LORD- do not lead us out if you will not go with us. If Your presence does not go with us- as Moses says in Ex. 33- then do not tell us to leave this place. Moses was unwilling to lead the people if God's presence was not promised and provided! Throughout the life of Moses- God spoke to His servant as a

man speaks to a friend- face to face. Now in a time of transition- of great uncertainty and danger- God's presence is promised to Joshua and the people once again! This is not the general presence of God in that He is present everywhere- else this promise would not bring any comfort. Rather, Joshua is being promised that the special, merciful presence of God- His Spirit- would fellowship with them! Israel would be the apple of His eye. These people would be God's people- God would tabernacle and commune with them! The LORD does not tell Joshua what needs to be done and leave Joshua to get to work- He first promises His powerful presence! Why would this be so encouraging? Why is God's presence such a gift of grace? Well, remember what Joshua is going up against. He will fight giants, strongholds, fortified cities, horses and chariots, swords and spears. The Canaanite people were far more numerous and far more advanced in military warfare. There is a huge territory to be conquered- and their enemy was hostile and ruthless. But what does Israel have? They do not have armor and horses- no military might to speak of in comparison. But they do have the presence of the LORD! And His presence makes all the difference! Success is promised- they are assured that their mission will succeed because if God is for them- who can be against them? What can man do to me- if the almighty God fights for us! I will be with you, Joshua. As the chosen leader- taking up the mantle of Moses- Joshua will be the mediator and prophet in Israel. Joshua may be feeble and scared- but the LORD was with Him! Since God was with him, he could stand! This promise of God's presence stands firm- God is with His people! Our God says to us as well- never will I leave you, never will I forsake you- Heb. 13:5! And we, like Israel are in a battle as well. Not against flesh and blood- but against principalities and powers as Eph. 6 says. So what is our hope? Where is our comfort when it comes to the Spiritual battle we are in? As we read in II Cor. 10- our weapons are not of flesh- but rather we have divine power to destroy strongholds! We fight against heresies and lies- and demons and powers of darkness. And since our God's presence is with us- even in us- we will be victorious! His presence ensures that we will not go down to defeat- but we in Him will be victorious- because He is with us! Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ- therefore we can be assured that our salvation is secure since it rests on God's powerful presence! What a comfort! Never will I leave you! He never leaves us to fight our battles alone- we are in His hands! But we have a better leader than Joshua- we have the very Word of God! We can have absolute confidence in our NT Joshua because He has won the victory! The land of promise is our possession because Jesus has defeated every foe and He will bring us into our heavenly land of promise! This is really the comfort of the Immanuel- God is with us!

II. Our Solemn Responsibility

So Joshua is promised- assured of God's presence. But we also find that there are obligations coupled to these promises. Joshua will not just sit back and do nothing- he receives a charge to do something! As we find in v. 6- there is a theme that runs through our passage! As God's people rest upon His presence and promises; they are also charged to be strong and courageous! Stand firm in the strength the LORD- take courage and diligently engage in the task at hand. Joshua was charged as the leader to set an example- to be courageous- lion hearted and fearless. As the Lord continues in v. 9- do not be afraid or dismayed. Be fearless in your confidence and conviction- be stirred up to stand firm in your faith. Since the LORD is with us and fights for us- why be discouraged or afraid? Do not allow fear and doubt or unbelief to dwell in your hearts. Now you can understand why Joshua may have been fearful. Imagine the mighty foe- and the great responsibility placed on his shoulders. When you are a leader- people expect you to have all the answers- they look to you and rely on you. So how should Joshua prepare for battle? What should he do to quit his fears? Should he number his troops? Sharpen his spears- go over tactics? Instead of being told to get the soldiers ready for battle with an intense boot camp- we find that Joshua and Israel will only stand firm- they will only stand in the day of battle- if they are prepared by reading and meditating on God's Word! (V. 8) Courage comes not by increasing your armies' size- but by reading the Bible! Strength is not found in strong walls- but in devotion to the Scriptures! This is radically opposed to everything the world says. But victory in Israel will not come by horses and chariots; not man's hands! The battle belongs to the Lord! He fights for His people! Joshua was to be strengthened by reading God's Law- but also obeying what it said. And in obedience to the Word, he would find success. A delight in God's Word is necessary mark of those who will stand firm in the battle. Now picture this- Joshua is going to battle against a real foe here. But the weapon of conquest is the Word! To be victorious, the weapon you must take is your Bible! The best training for victory is a Bible Study! That sounds ludicrous to the ears of man- but God's people know that victory is found in the word! The Sword of the Spirit is our God-appointed weapon!

We, like the Israelites, are engaged in a battle. We too need to be stirred up and ready for battle. How can we be strong- how can we be ready for battle? By putting on the armour of God- as Eph. 6 says. We can stand firm when we take up the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God!

We like Joshua need to be ready- and equipped. Not by practicing our swordsmanship- but taking up the sword of

the Word! By reading and meditating on the Word of God! (Read v. 8) We need to learn to lean on and follow Him! As we learn to submit to the teachings of the Word- we find our hope is firmly on our LORD for our deliverance! This Word is to be always on your mind and in your mouth. The truth is, the mind of man quickly becomes rusty and forgetful. We start looking to passing things and pleasures for purpose. Joshua needed to read and re-read the Law- as we also need to continually go back to the Word to be reminded again. And specifically as a leader in Israel- Joshua was charged to bring out what he had learned to the people. God's people learn that His Word is to be their guide- that His power is our only source of strength! Nothing produces confidence in the hearts of leaders- in the hearts of God's people- as the confident trusting in the call and command of God! Joshua needed to both know the Word- and obey it! As we trust in God's promises we respond with obedience. As II Cor. 4 says- we do not lose heart- our competence and confidence comes from our God!

III. The Prosperous Outcome

After the call to strength and courage- after the command to know and obey the Law of the LORD- Joshua is finally promised a prosperous outcome. As v. 8 concludes- then your way will be prosperous and you will have good success. What does it mean that he will have success? Success is defined as accomplishing the purpose set for you by the LORD. For Joshua and the Israelites- this would mean taking possession of the land promised to their forefather Abraham. This recipe for success holds true today. We do not need any gimmicks or tricks- success for a Christian is found in reading and mediating upon God's Word! We often lose sight of what Christian success really is- communion with God, obeying His word- and one day living with Him in glory! The tool we need to gain these is simply God's Word! As we find recorded in the 10 Commandments- when you obey the commands it will go well with you in the land in which you are living. Obeying God means that it will go well- that you will succeed! Although the promises of God are sure- enjoying the benefits of those promises are directly tied to obeying His commands. For Joshua and the Israelites- they were given the land by God. They received the land as a gift of grace. But in order to remain in the land and enjoy its fruit, God required them to obey His commands. We will note as this book unfolds, the people of Israel never took full possession of all the Land that had been promised. There remained only a partial occupation. Part of the reason that Israel never fully expanded to its promised borders is because they grew complacent through their compromise and slothful in their obedience. They gave us- they became comfortable with the presence of these Canaanites- even intermarrying with them. So

they did not obey v. 8 and thus they never fully received the success which was possible. But what does obedience and success mean for us? For us, success means that we too will be able to enter into the promised rest that remains. But is our entrance into the Promised Land dependant on our obedience? Here we must be clear. In order for us to enter into the promised rest above- we need to have faith in Jesus Christ. Without faith- we will never enter the heavenly Promised Land. As Acts says- believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It is in our union with Christ that we gain this success! So the obedience that is required is supplied by our greater Joshua- Jesus Christ! To say this another way, the obedience that is necessary for our success- that our way may prosper- that we might be granted access to the heavenly land of rest. That obedience has been supplied by our NT Joshua! So for us, as God's people, victory is secured because we have a greater leader! One who not only knows- but has perfectly obeyed the Will of the Father. One who not only leads us into battle- but equips us to serve within his army! Jesus really did mediate upon God's Law day and night as Psalm 1 puts it- He did really obey all that was written about Him in the word. That is the good news revealed in this book- where Joshua falls short- Jesus succeeds! Where the enemies were never fully conquered- Jesus has and will defeat every foe! Where Joshua was commanded to be strong and courageous- Jesus was and is perfectly strong and courageous!

To conclude, the book of Joshua gives us a glimpse of the victory that is possible for God's people because our greater Joshua has come. Indeed- Joshua is the OT version of the name Jesus- meaning the LORD God saves! We follow our Joshua- Jesus- whose name means- the LORD Saves! We, like Israel, are engaged in a battle. We fight against a foe much stronger and more numerous than us. How can we succeed? How can we reach the end and goal-only by the works of Jesus! We fight a spiritual battle with spiritual weapons- the Word of God! For God's people, there is a heavenly rest- a city above that remains. We have an inheritance that is undefiled and never perishes as Peter says. Listen again to Hebrew 13- He has said- never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. So we can confidently say- the Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me? God's servant is commissioned to lead God's people into the Promised Land. Our book opens with the death of Moses- and one day Joshua will die as well! We need a victorious leader who ever lives to secure success! As Jesus said in Mt. 28- behold I am with you always. All authority has been given to me. Praise God for His servant who has and will lead His people forth victoriously!