

LEAVING EGYPT (Part III)

There comes a time when we have to ‘hand the reins’ over to someone else, and that is what happened with Moses and Joshua. For forty years, Moses had led the children of Israel through the wilderness. Sometimes they followed enthusiastically, but often ... not so enthusiastic! Also, during this time, he was preparing Joshua to lead them into the land of Canaan.

The first time we meet Joshua was in the desert at Rephidim where there was no water for the people to drink (Ex. 17:1). They repeated their regular complaint to Moses, how they wished they had never left Egypt. Moses was understandably frustrated with them, and he asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord told him to stand with the staff before the people, - the same staff with which he had smitten the Red Sea, - ... and God told him to strike the rock and water would flow out. As it did, the Amalekites suddenly attacked the Israelites, and Moses instructed Joshua, *Ex. 17:9* Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek. ... ¹³ And Joshua discomfited [*defeated*] Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

On another occasion, long before entering Canaan (Num. 13), Joshua was one of twelve men sent on a forty-day mission to ‘spy out’ the land. While they all highlighted the glories of Canaan, ten of the twelve reported how they believed it was impossible to conquer. Basically, God saved them out of Egypt, kept them through the wilderness, ... and would allow them to ‘fall at the last hurdle’!

Does God do that? Does He open doors, lead us along, and when we think we are making progress, He lets us down?! Is that the kind of God we have, Who builds up our hopes for them to come crashing down? ... That’s how the Hebrews were thinking ... all except Joshua and Caleb, *Num. 13:30* And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, *Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.* ³¹ But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. ³² And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth [*gobbles!*] up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. ³³ And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. ... *They did not go!*

They had witnessed the plagues in Egypt, and how God had kept them safe, and how He had taken them out of Egypt, and how He had fed and cared for them during the forty years in the wilderness ... and *still* they were doubting!

Obviously, the Hebrews reckoned it was too hard for God to get them out of the wilderness and into Canaan! ... And they complained some more, *Num. 14:2* all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! ³ ... were it not better for us to return into Egypt? ... On hearing their gripes and groans old Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God in despair. ... Then Joshua and Caleb spoke up, ⁷, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. ⁸ *If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.*

This was the calibre of the man God chose to replace Moses, and who *did* actually lead the people across the River Jordan and into the Promised Land. 'Joshua' (Yeshua) is the Old Testament Hebrew name which translated into the Greek in the New Testament is Ἰησοῦς, *Jesus*. ... It means "Jehovah is salvation", "Jehovah saves" ... And that is the story of Joshua.

HIS CHALLENGE *Joshua 1:2* Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

What a mighty promise God gave to Joshua! In the wilderness he heard the complaints of the people against Moses and Aaron, but as he entered the land of Canaan, he was given the confidence God was with him and would bless in the days ahead. As he would cross the River Jordan (ch. 3) and capture Jericho (ch. 6), and advance through the land, - no matter how great the challenge, God had promised, ³ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. ... And God would keep His word!

Behind him was the wilderness and the mountains out of which God had taken him and Caleb the whole way from Egypt. Ahead of him were *more* challenges, but since the Lord had kept him in the past, he knew the Lord would continue to keep him in the future. ... Yes, it was a challenge but one which would bring great gain for God repeated to Joshua what He had covenanted with Abram, the father of the nation, centuries earlier in Gen. 15:18-21, *Joshua 1:4* From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. ... **His challenge** ...

HIS COURAGE *Joshua 1: 6* Be strong and of a good *courage* ...⁷ Only be thou strong and very *courageous*, that thou mayest 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 mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. ...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 goest.

Joshua had lived in Moses' shadow. Moses had made all the decisions, but when he was gone, Joshua became God's man at the helm. It was a daunting task. Joshua knew all about the Hebrews and had witnessed first-hand their rebelliousness. Indeed, if God had not called him to replace Moses, he would not have volunteered! He was capable, but he felt inadequate for he had to be assured, *1: 6* Be strong and of a good courage ...⁷ ... be thou strong and very courageous. ...⁹ ... Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.

He was under no illusions as to how challenging the task. He was responsible before God as he led the people, ⁷ ... that thou mayest 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 mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. ... To continue the right way, he had to do it God's way! To get where he was going, - that thou mayest prosper, - he had to follow God's leading, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law ... for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. As long as he continued to trust in God, according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded, - he would receive the courage to achieve the plans God had set before him. ... **His challenge, his courage** ...

HIS COMMITMENT *Joshua 1:8* This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

We all know that to achieve the goal we must be committed. Nothing worthwhile is 'handed to us on a plate', - we must be faithful to the work, and to be devoted to the Lord of the work, in doing the work. We don't only work for a church, but we work to serve the Lord Who is the Master of the church. ... Frances Havergal describes what it means, "Take my life and let it be *consecrated, Lord, to Thee*". It means, "Take my moments and my days ... Take my hands ... my feet ... my voice ... my lips ... my silver and my gold, not a

mite would I withhold ... Take my intellect ... my will ... Take my heart ... Take my love ... Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee”.

Being a Christian is handing over all you have and are to God, - it is not a one day-a-week commitment, and if that is all it is, it will not last for it is not real commitment. Here is Joshua at the beginning of his ministry and he is committed to the work, committed to the Word, and committed to the Lord, ^{1:8} This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. ... In trusting God for a miracle, Joshua committed himself daily to the service of the Lord. **Joshua’s challenge, his courage, his commitment ...**

HIS CONFIDENCE ^{Joshua 1:10} Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹ *Pass through* the host, and command the people, saying, *Prepare* you victuals; for within three days ye shall *pass over* this Jordan, to go in to *possess* the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

In three days, *we shall do it!* ... Joshua’s confidence was in the Lord! Before he took a single step forward, his trust was in God. He knew he could not conquer Canaan on his own, or with the people of Israel. The task was too daunting. He had already witnessed the shallowness of their faith so he knew he could not rely on them. He knew if he was to achieve everything God presented before him to do, he had to have God on his side ... and with God on his side he took charge of the situation. He gave four simple instructions to his commanders, - ¹¹ *pass through ... prepare ... pass over ... possess.*

These were mighty commands, especially to a people who had been telling themselves they would have been better staying in Egypt for the enemy is too big and too strong, and we are too small and too weak, and we will never defeat them. ... We have come all this way through the forty years in the wilderness to be destroyed in a battle we don’t want to fight! ... However, God does not waste His time or efforts to bring His people to the end of a cul-de-sac only to leave them there ... for He does not only change what is around us, He also changes what is in our hearts, *to believe in Him.* ... And to trust Him is a gift with which He blesses His people,

Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest,
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest ...
We may trust Him fully, all for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.

Warren Wiersbe, “When you trust God’s promises and step out by faith, you can be sure the Lord will give you the directions you need when you need them”.

Joshua’s challenge, his courage, his commitment, his confidence ...

HIS CONCLUSION *Joshua 24:15* ... choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. ¹⁶ And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; ¹⁷ For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed.

Joshua told the children of Israel he and his family would keep on serving the Lord. ... You do not stop serving Him in this life, no matter how long you live, and no matter what conditions you are in. ... And there are the ‘Joshuas’ ‘up at the front’, to whom God gives the responsibility of leadership. There are also the officers of the people, who serve alongside the ‘Joshuas’. But no army is complete without its people for it was not only Joshua who entered Canaan, with his officers, but it was Joshua, his officers, and all the people of Israel.

At the end of his life, he told them, choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. ... It was *decision time* for God’s people ... and we, - in our fellowship, - have arrived at *our* ‘decision time’. When we close the door this afternoon, we can either decide this is as far as we are prepared to go, or we can decide God has more for us to do, and we shall follow Him! ... He gave the men and women the vision and burden to commence the work here in the late 1800’s, - that was Part I of the work. Then in 1900 they built this hall and ten years later they built the sanctuary, - that was Part II of the work here. For over one hundred and twenty-three years, God has provided for us during all that time, and He *is* providing for us now as we step out by faith into Part III of the work. ... The next step is to ‘cross through the Jordan’ by faith, believing in God, - in the words of the hymn, - to “bid [*our*] anxious fears subside... [*we are*] weak, but Thou art mighty, hold [*us*] in Thy powerful hand ... Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer, ever be my strength and shield”.