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Joshua 1

"God Commissions Joshua"

January 11, 2017

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Joshua 1. Tonight we begin a new book. It's the first book in the Bible with the name of a person on it. Very helpful so far, aren't I?

Joshua was chosen by the LORD to succeed Moses and lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. As far as history goes, Joshua will only fill in 25 years of history. The children of Israel left Egypt in 1445 B.C. This book begins in 1405 B.C. It will run till about 1379 B.C., which is when Joshua died. Most of what we will learn from Joshua occurs in the next seven and a half years, which is about the amount of time that he spent with the children of Israel conquering the land before dividing the land and then giving them the responsibility of clearing their portion of the land of the idolaters and all that had planted themselves there.

So the book bears Joshua's name. It was probably written by him, although it is difficult to know for sure. But the details give us the entrance into the land, which we've been working towards, the overthrow of the people in the land, after years of God's patient waiting, and then the division of the land by God to the tribes. A few months ago, we finished the book of Deuteronomy, and we were going to go right into Joshua, and then I really felt like the Lord wanted us to spend some time talking about faith. And so, rather than just jump in, we went to Hebrews 11 and spent the better part of four months (plus all of the breaks and the holidays and all) going through, verse-by-verse, Hebrews 11. But now we are back here, and we want to kind of catch up. A few months ago, when we finished Deuteronomy, we told you that Deuteronomy is really a series of farewell messages from Moses - the patriarch, if you will, a 120-year-old Jewish statesman - that he delivered to the children of Israel over a forty-day period. They were the last forty days of his life. In Deuteronomy 1:3 we are told that his address to them began on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year of their exile, if you will. They would prepare to enter the land under Joshua on the tenth day of the first month of the forty-first year. So forty days for the messages (that is the book of Deuteronomy), thirty days for the mourning over Moses' death = seventy days in all. And then, as you begin the book, the LORD said, "In three days we're going forward." So seventy-three days in all. So that's about all the numbers I can confuse you with. But 25 years is the coverage, if you will.

It's been a long route getting here, hasn't it? If you've been with us on Wednesday nights, as we turned to Hebrews 11 and all, we talked about "by faith." But the book of Joshua is all about conquest. It is all about not just knowing what God has promised but living with it and running with it and internalizing it and letting it become your motivation. So it is a book that is filled with practical words about having your feet do the faith walk. "Possessing your possessions" is a key phrase that you find throughout the book. And much of the book is practical about the fact that faith, if you have it, produces works. It has to. James said (2:17), "Faith without works" is what? "Dead" because it's just kind of a nebulous "I believe," but it doesn't do anything for me nor does it move me at all.

The children of Israel had been in captivity for 430 years. The first 30 years were favorable. Joseph was alive. He knew Pharaoh. They got along just fine. The next 400 were increasingly difficult for them, and when God sent Moses to bring them out, he brought with him the ten plagues that you know about. They took, from all we can gather historically and biblically, about nine months to transpire (all ten of them) before the LORD brought these children of Israel (through Moses) out with that first Passover. The trip for the two or three million folks began in 1445 B.C. It took them six weeks of walking to get to Mount Sinai, including that tremendous walk through the Red Sea. At Mount Sinai, they would camp together for almost a year - for one purpose: God wanted them to know Him better. They had been in captivity. They knew His Word, to some extent. They had very little relationship with God. And God established this relationship with them. He began to feed them by His hand. The manna fell from the skies. They got water out of a rock. They had an intercessor, Moses, who would bring to them the desires of God's heart. So the Law came, and the sinfulness of man was laid out, and God's provision through substitutionary sacrifice was introduced to the nation for the first time. And they began to learn about their sinfulness and His holiness and His solution. The priesthood is established during that year at Mount Sinai. All of the Law is passed along to Moses. Leaders are recognized and raised up. The tribes are put in certain places and given certain responsibilities. And then they leave there after almost a year which, according to Deuteronomy, was an eleven-day trip to where they are right now - Kadesh Barnea - on the border with Israel or the Land of Promise. An eleven-day, 126-mile walk that turned into, because of unbelief, a 40-year death march because when they got there, they were unwilling to do what they should have done after all of that time - trust God. And they decided not to trust God. When the twelve spies returned and the ten agreed that it was way too dangerous and far too difficult, the people agreed with the ten that

God couldn't be trusted; and God, in His anger, sent them back into the wilderness. "All right. Die in the wilderness! I'll take your kids in. When you're gone, we'll go with them." And that's exactly what He did. So here's 40 years later, and the children are standing with Joshua on the Land of Promise. We've mentioned to you, as we've gone through the Old Testament, there's very little written about those 38 years in the wilderness - 38 because they'd been out there a year and a little bit already; they were coming back the previous year, and there's something written about that. Wandering was just that. They went nowhere, so nothing to report.

This last twelve months had been pretty exciting because God had taken these people who had looked to Him (this second generation), and He'd begun to give them victory over pretty powerful enemies on the other side of the Jordan. To the north and to the south, they had found God's hand with them to win in overwhelming circumstances, and so they had learned to obey the LORD and that power came when they did that, when they walked with God. Moses had brought them to the border. He'd delivered the book of Deuteronomy. He'd been taken by the LORD up to Mount Nebo to die. They had sat and listened to Moses for nearly six weeks - cheer them on, and remind them of who they were, and what God had done, and what God would yet do, and the need to believe Him, and, "Don't do what your parents did. Obey His counsel." And then he was taken, and Joshua is moved up into this leadership role. And the call to faith and the works of faith and the need to get feet to your faith begins right here in chapter 1.

If the children of Israel had been wanderers, they would now become warriors. And they really haven't changed much except in their outlook and their attitude towards the LORD. God's love for this people was stubborn. By that I mean He was not going to give up on them. He had promised Abraham that his people would have a land, and, by goodness, they were going to get it. He loves you in that same stubborn way, which I think is a good thing to know. "Being confident of this very thing," Paul said to the Philippians (1:6), "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."

In this group of folks that we start with tonight, there are only two original members left of the adult group 40 years earlier. One of them is in charge now - Joshua. The other one is the ultimate example of being a man of faith that leads to works - a guy named Caleb who, at 85 years old, is going to show up with a 45-year-old promise in hand and his boys and say, "I want what God promised me 45

years ago." And he was 85, and he wasn't looking for a rocking chair; he was looking for a fight for a mountain that he believed God had given to him.

There's lots to learn in this book. I pray we don't miss a thing. I'll prayerfully try to go as slow as we can. Historically, we move forward with God's people. In fact, Joshua is the book that sets the stage for the next seven books of the Bible that tell us what the history of the children of Israel was in the land. Joshua is there to bring us into the land and to bring us forward. If you weren't with us last Wednesday, may I recommend to you that you go back and listen to the study. We did an entire evening on just how God prepared Joshua for this ministry. Lots to learn about how God prepares us under others' discipleship. But tonight we join him and head for the Land of Promise.

Here's the outline of the book - very easy to remember. Joshua 1-5: we're going into the land; Joshua 6-12: we're going to conquer the land, battle after battle, place after place; and, really, the last twelve chapters (13-24) talk about the distribution of the land and where God put people and why, and what He was planning to do with them. Some commentators see Joshua as the Old Testament corollary to the book of Ephesians. The book of Ephesians is easily outlined by three words - sit and then walk and then stand. And it is sort of the same way in this book. Paul would write to the Corinthians, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Or, in other words, this is best used by the church to learn how to walk with God. He wrote to the Romans (15:4), "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." So I think this'll be one of the most relevant books to your spiritual lives that you'll find - as far as daily applying what you've learned. It's historical, it's prophetic, practical. You know, Joshua is a type of Jesus throughout this book. His name itself is the Hebrew for Yeshua, which (in the Greek translation) would be Jesus. So, the children of Israel were in bondage. Moses, the lawgiver, couldn't really get them into the land. He could just tell them that they needed help. But under Joshua, under Jesus, they find new life. They come into a new land, into a new place. John started his gospel by saying (1:17), "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." It's kind of that same picture here (in the Old Testament) for us. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill," Jesus said in Matthew 5:17.

So let's get started. Verse 1, chapter 1. Look, barely got introduced. "After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, 'Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.' " I love the fact that the LORD begins by talking about Moses and calls the death of Moses the servant of the LORD. If God gives you that title, I don't think there's a better title that you could grab hold of. Nothing better than this. And not only was he a servant of the LORD, but he left behind a guy who he had worked with for decades to take his place. He was now being elevated to a chief servant. Really, ministry is all about service, right? And about discipleship. And so Moses did his thing.

Notice, in verse 2, that the LORD said to Joshua, "Moses My servant is dead. Now get up, arise." Joshua, of course, knew Moses was dead. I don't think the LORD was going, "Have you heard he's dead?" But I think what He is saying is, "It's time to move on now. The grieving time is over." It is normal and healthy when we grieve loss. It is difficult when we lose people that we care for. It can be easier when they knew the Lord. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "We grieve but not like those who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). But it's necessary that we weep and when we know the future and the eternity. But there's a time of grief. And, in Deuteronomy 34:8, the LORD said they grieved for thirty days, and they wept and they mourned. And there's a time of weeping, but then there's a time you've got to move on. I mean, your life's not over with. You've got stuff to do. So your heart breaks, and you hurt, and you deal with it, and you let God minister to you. But then you've got to get back on the horse. Death is inevitable, mourning is essential, moving on is vital. Right? You're going to die. You're going to weep. But you've got to move on. But this was even worse. There was not just the death of a man that they had looked to for a generation; there was a new guy in town, a new guy on the block, who didn't feel as comfortable or as confident as Moses. And we'll see that as we go.

But, needless to say, the LORD, notice, addresses it immediately with Joshua, and He said, "I'm going to be with you as I was with him. You don't need to worry about this or struggle. Your position I've established. I'm not going to leave you. I'm not going to forsake you." But there's a change in leadership. It is always God's plan for His work to continue - even when leadership changes. And that's just, unfortunately, the way things have to happen. When Pastor Chuck died a little over three years ago, I was like, "What are we going to do without Chuck?!" He was a guy I looked to for everything. He was a good buddy. I could call him and ask him questions. He's gone! And things change. Things get difficult. But God's work doesn't stop. The LORD doesn't go, "Oh, my gosh. I lost Moses. Now what?" No. His work is going to continue. Succession is good. It honors the Lord. Some people step away from an old work, and they begin a new work. Joshua was not going to be like Moses. Joshua was not at all Moses. He holds to the same principles. There's a continuity, but there's absolutely no conformity to Moses' way of doing things, and that's all right. I read somewhere once that God buries His workers, but His work goes on. And that's exactly what took place here. So Moses is out of the picture. But, man, he was a big figure. He cast a huge shadow. And now there's this, I won't say young guy - he's not young, this guy is in his 60's or 70's, but he's just coming to his own - and there was going to be lots of difficulty for him.

Now notice, I want you to see verse 2 where the LORD says, "I am giving to them this land." And then in verse 3 it says, "I have given it to you." I want you to mark that down. The land would indeed be given to them by God. It was a sure thing, but they would need to go in and possess it. "I have given you every place the soles of your feet tread." There's an "I am giving," and then there's the, "I have given." God wants much for you. But some of it is only going to come to you as you walk in the very things God promises. And there's this balance between the promises of God and our response in faith that is absolutely vital because works have to follow faith. So, "I'm giving this to you." Great. And, "I've given them to you." There's no question as to whether you're going to have them or not, but you're going to have to go down and put your feet down. Now, look, there was going to be lots of opposition to this trek for these two or three million folks. There were giants in the land that looked absolutely unbeatable. There were armies that were far superior to them. There were walled cities that were impenetrable, had God not helped. There were skilled soldiers that could shoot your eye out with a pea shooter while you tried to figure out how you were going to fight back. And yet, by the grace of God, every one of them would fall - if they would be willing to walk

with God. So, look, I have to go in and lay claim to the possessions God has given to me by faith because else I'll come short of it. Look, God said, "I want you to have peace and not worry." And you might say, "I don't have that." But you should know it's available. "I don't see how." Well, I don't either, but it's available. Right? "My peace I give to you, not as the world" (John 14:27). "Well, I'm still worryin'." Then you'd better put your foot down somewhere, and be convinced God is right, and you're not so right. Same thing with rest in the storm or joy in difficulty or always hope. There's a great optimism that comes when you know the Lord. But those are positions of faith.

Notice, in verse 4, that the land God promised His people, in our modern map, would have taken up Israel and Iran and Iraq and Lebanon and Jordan. You've seen the little map about Israel being this small, and the Arab world around it, and people saying, "Who's taking whose land?" You've probably seen that little map floating around. But God's intention was huge. I mean, it literally occupied 300,000 square miles. That's what the LORD said to Joshua. "I've given it to you, go in and get it" - 300,000 square miles. At the very height of their occupation under King David, they occupied 30,000 square miles. The children of Israel took a tenth of what God promised them. There should be a lesson in there somewhere. There was a whole lot available that they never went to get. They got 10% of what God promised them. They became complacent. They settled for what they had. They never pressed on to what they might get thereafter. We do that, too. You know, you get saved, and you're so excited for about a year, and then it's hard to find Christians that are on that same growth spurt this way from years two through twenty. One year, they, "Wooooo!" (Pastor Jacks hand goes up), and then ooohhhh (Then his hand goes down). "We've got it all figured out now," cruise control. No! It's a battle. Go in, and get what God has provided! That's why God, in His Word, encourages us to press on, to possess our possession. In fact, Paul writes to the Hebrews, in chapter 4:1, "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it." You don't want part of what God has for you. You have much more. And I would be, I think, on safe ground to say to you - whatever your Christian experience is, or walk with God, you are far from what God has available. There is far more available than you're experiencing, and faith that gets legs begins to experience it and to step out. It wasn't supposed to happen all at once. It would take some time. The LORD said, in Exodus 23, through Moses to the people, "I'm going to drive out these nations from before you, but I'm not going to do it in one year lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous. But I'll do it

little by little. I'll drive them out before you, and you'll have increased, and you can inherit the land. It's going to take some time." And I would say the same thing to us. You want what God has? Then go get it, but know it's going to take more than a day or an hour or a year or a month. You've got a lot of growing to do. We should never stop growing, right? We should never stop pressing forward. One foot in front of the other, little by little. It's a process. Being strong in Christ is not like a Popeye cartoon - you eat a can of spinach, and in a half an hour, you're good, you've conquered the world. But verse 3 starts by "Every place you put your foot down, that's yours." Start by making some progress - one step before another. I think Paul, thirty years later (after he got saved), said to the Philippians (3:12-14), "I haven't arrived yet, but I'll tell you what. I'm forgetting the things that are behind, I'm pressing on, I want the mark, I want the high calling. I want what God has made available." So he says it here in verse 3. Verse 2, "I'm giving." Verse 3, "I've given. Put your foot down. No man can stand before you. It's going to work out." Look at verse 11. We'll just skip ahead real quick. "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' " Verse 13, "Remember" (or don't forget) "the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' " Verse 15, "...until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them." So, it's all about this, "Go in and take what God has given you. God is giving it to you. God has given it to you. You've still got to go in and take it. Don't forget that God has promised it." So, what grace God is showing a people who hardly deserved it. I mean, this is a generation and families whose descendants complained about God so much so that an entire generation died in the wilderness. And yet the Promised Land, to the LORD, was a gift, and He's a stubborn lover. Right? Just as salvation is a gift to you, but God calls for a response. Look. Salvation's free. Here it is. What do you have to do? Repent of your sins, believe that He said what He did, and He's going to do it in your life, and receive Him. You've got to act. It's a gift, but you have to act.

So the LORD tells Joshua, in verse 5, of his security. Stand strong. Verse 7, "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go." So, the LORD tells Joshua the gift of the land, but here it comes with certain commands to follow in

their possessing of the land and possessing their possessions. And it was that they needed to cooperate with the LORD. Right? He was going to be on their team. He was going to be their leader. It's kind of like salvation. He does the saving, He's your Savior. You do the following because He's, then, also your Lord. Same thing. God will bring them in, but "be careful to walk with Me so that I might be able to bless you." So there's a balance between God does everything, and we have to strive to maintain it all. I think, and maybe you've heard the old phrase that says, "Pray as if everything depends upon God, for it does, and the work as if everything depends upon you because He's going to look for your cooperation." It's kind of that balance that we need to find. It's in the church today. God has made the church great promises, and we rarely seem to possess them in our walks. These guys are going to cross over the Jordan in a couple of weeks. They're going to overthrow Jericho by faith. They're going to see significant battles won that are unbelievable. I would think, if you were on the Jericho team, and you saw an entire city - that was as powerful as Jericho - collapse inwardly, that you might go, "You know, we're on the right team." But that didn't happen. What instead happened was it didn't take long for these folks to settle in and to begin to be comfortable with, "Well, the LORD does it, and He handles it." (Pastor Jack speaks in a nonchalant tone). It's like having two oars in a boat. If you only have one paddle in the water, you're just doing this, aren't you? You're kind of spinning around in circles. You need a faith, but it's got to produce a work. You need the book of Romans stacked on top of the book of James. Peter, in 2 Peter 1:3, began by saying, "Knowing that, according to His divine power, He has given to us everything that pertains to life and to godliness," and then it says, "so add to your faith." Wait a minute! I've got everything that pertains to life and godliness. That's right. So now add to your faith. "Give all diligence to virtue, and to virtue add some knowledge, and to knowledge add some self-control and to self-control add perseverance, and to perseverance add godliness." You go, "Wait a minute. I thought I had everything that pertained to life and godliness." Oh, you do. But you're going to have to cooperate. And it's the same here. The Christians who, "Oh, it's all by faith, I'm not going to do anything," that's lunacy! It's faith that produces behavior, produces action. It was Spurgeon who wrote that, "Most Christians, in terms of their experience with really finding what God has available, are in the river of experience up to their ankles." He said, "There are a few that have waded in the stream up to their knees, fewer still are at chest high, and I've found very few, over the years, who are in the river swimming, unable to touch the bottom." But God has that available to us.

Let me ask you something. How much of the gifts of God are you experiencing in your life? How worry-free is your life? How joy-filled is your life? Is it unspeakable? How much peace do you have? How much confidence in your prayer life? How assured are you of where you stand with God? How fruitful are you in reaching the lost? What has God given you to do that you just see God's hand all over? Where is that fingerprint work of God? God has lots to do, but it's faith that acts upon the Scriptures. Sure you're saved, but are you moving forward? People get saved, they grow a year or two, and then they await the rapture. "Got my ticket." Showing up for a study on-and-off again, never really growing.

One of the hardest things, according to verses 5 and 6, that Joshua had to face - and imagine being in his shoes - was that he had an anxiety to fill some pretty big shoes. I mean, he was going to have to take on a people that he'd watched for 40 years just grieve Moses to no end, and now they were on his shoulders. How would you feel (if you were Joshua) stepping into Moses' shoes, especially when you read back in chapter 34:10 of Deuteronomy that the LORD said there'll never be a guy like this again? I'm sure you're going, "Well, I'm second place already! The LORD has shot me down before I started." He needs lots of spiritual encouragement, and you can watch the LORD, over these next few years, often coming to Joshua to go, "I'm with you, man. I got this. Me and you, we can do this together." The LORD was so good in encouraging him. He'll do that with you as well. Right? But we have to move with courage that is faith-dependent.

And God gave Joshua very specific instructions. Notice in verse 7 and in verse 8, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe 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 of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Pretty good promises, don't you think? Now there're five very similar direct commands here in these couple of verses. Notice verse 7, "I want you to observe" (or put an effort in) "to do everything that the law commanded. I don't want you to go left of it or turn right of it. I don't want this word that I've given you to leave your mouth. I want you to put your mind to it and meditate on it night and day so that you can observe everything that is in it." And then, both at the end of verse 7 and at the end of verse 8, the LORD says, "If you'll do that, you'll make your way prosperous. If you do that, you'll find good success." "Joshua, here's the way to victory for you and the people." These five things, and they're all very, like I said, related - be

obedient, be narrow-minded (not right or left), vocalize the truth of God both to yourself and to others (let it not depart from your mouth), meditate on what God has said. It's not the transcendental meditation where they seek to have you empty your mind. The biblical word for meditation means to think it through until it sinks in - mull it over, chew on it, ruminates is a great word for the word "meditate." Let God's Word ruminates in your heart so it forms an understanding in you. In fact, I think the word "meditate" is used about twenty-five times in the Bible, and it is always used to speak about thoughtful deliberation with implication of speaking to yourself about what you're learning. So God's ways for taking over the Land of Promise to Joshua are, "Hide His Word in your heart, obey it with courage, let your mind meditate on it, and let God's Word settle it. And you'll be fine. You and the people are going to be great, and you're going to find the land that God has available. So, Joshua, as you face this new challenge, make sure you know God's Word, practice it in your life, don't turn right or left, fill your mouth with it, fill your thoughts with it, and let your leadership example come from it."

And then, as far as verse 9 is concerned, He says, "You're not going to be able to fill Moses' shoes, but that's no big deal. You don't have to be afraid or dismayed. I'm with you." The cure for fearfulness is a conscious awareness of God's presence, that He is with you. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." What's the next part say? "For You are with me." Right? "For You are with me." Psalm 23:4. "For You are with me." I'm not afraid because You're here, You're with me. "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

It's interesting to me that many people looking at the Word of God conclude that they are always a special case. We see it all the time. People come in for counseling, and we'll go, "Well here's what the Bible says," and they'll say this to you, "Maybe you don't understand my condition, my situation, my specific needs." To which I reply, "No, and I don't really want to know what they are. I just want to tell you this is what God says. It works." "Well, I'm a special case." "You're not a special case." There's no special case here. There're no loopholes here. This is just simple. "Obey Me, you'll prosper."

"Then Joshua," verse 10, "commanded the officers of the people," (must have been quite an organizational structure to get the word out to two or three million people encamped for miles in every direction) "saying, 'Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three

days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess." ' ' " So, he reiterates what God had just told him. In fact, I would suggest to you that this one verse is the same speech he gave 40 years earlier, and nobody listened. "Come on! Let's go take it. God is with us." They went, "No, we're terrified." And they died. Same message, different generation, different crowd, if you will. "Let's wait for three days. In three days, we'll cross over the Jordan."

Now, I don't want to get too mystical with you, but I kind of like the prophetic nature of God's Word. It says, "In three days, we're going to a new world, we're going to be a new land, we're going to have a new life," and it kind of shows to me the fingerprints of how the Holy Spirit is always involved. You know, Abraham took Isaac, had to travel for three days - seeing him as if dead in his eyes, and yet he received him back to life. Jesus - three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, then resurrection comes, and there's new life. You'll find this three-day passage a lot in the Bible. Like I said, don't get too mystical. Wooooo, goosebumps. But I like when the Lord kind of sticks His hand on stuff, and it seems to repeat itself, and the lesson is always there.

Well, then Joshua turned to speak to two and a half tribes, "to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh," and he said to them, in verse 13, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, "The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land." Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren" (or come with them, if you will) "armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise" (or towards the east). The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, if you remember back (and you can put in the margin Numbers 32), were farmers for the most part, and they noticed that the land there was very conducive, I think, to growing crops and all. And so they went to Moses, and they said, "We'd like this land." And Moses made a deal with them, "You can have it. You can leave your kids here and your wives here. But you come along with us until our people get the land God has promised to them, and when that is over, you can go back, and you can work the fields and whatever." From a spiritual standpoint, their request is very interesting

because this is two and a half tribes out of twelve, who are willing to settle down and take their inheritance outside the Land of Promise. This wasn't in the land. This was outside the land that God had desired for them. And I really think that they represent, by the way that we run into them in the Scriptures, believers who become satisfied with their spiritual development and really have no more desire to go forward. "We've had enough. This is good enough. I don't see how it could get any better than this. This fits our needs perfectly. Oh, thank You, LORD." But you have to say this wasn't the land God was bringing them to. Did He allow them to have it? He did. Did He chastise them for asking for it? He did not. He just demanded of them that they serve the others till they took over the land, and then they were free to go back to the place over there on the other side of the Jordan that really wasn't in the land that God had promised them. So, they were not hungry for God's best. They saw what they wanted and not what He had promised them. And I think that there's a problem with that, isn't there? Isn't it better that we want what God wants, His best? Not just "good enough." Right? "Good enough." They wouldn't fully come to inherit or possess the possessions He'd made available. And like many of these, people tend to, in church, grow over time, hit a plateau, and then kind of - if you say to them, "What's the Lord been doing with you the last 20 years?" and they want to tell you what happened in 1980. "Oh, you know, back in the day....." "All right. How 'bout yesterday?" "I haven't got nothin'." "How 'bout last week?" "Naaahhhh." "How 'bout 2011?" "Yeah, that was a pretty bad year. I don't know." They'll tell you great adventures of God and faith for the first few years, and then they've kind of lost in it.

Well, in the world as a Christian, if you're not going forward, you're going backward because the whole walk is uphill, isn't it? (If) you don't move forward, you go backwards. Paul, like I said, in Philippians 3 said thirty years later (after he got saved), he still didn't feel like he was truly where he wanted to be, but he kept pushing on. And so it's an important, I think, point of view that you watch these guys because they really were willing to just leave the land of God's promise, that He'd been promising since Abraham's day. "This is what I have for you," and they went, "Yeah, we'll just take something over here. I mean, thanks LORD, thanks, but no thanks." Imagine. And they chose to go otherwise.

There was still a whole lot of land to receive. The land, by the way (and we've mentioned it, and we can mention it again), represents not heaven (obviously, there're enemies there), but it represents a life in the Spirit, where you go forward, and you claim, and you hang onto, and you experience the goodness of God

by the Spirit. Egypt was bondage, was the flesh. Moses was the Law. He couldn't bring you into that place of fellowship with God. That needed to come through Joshua, through Jesus, right? He has to set you free from the bondage of sin and death. But the land is really a Spirit-filled life, and to the extent that folks lived with the LORD, that's what they experienced - victory. And you look at these two and a half tribes, and they say, "This is good enough," and it was a dangerous place to be. In fact, if you'll kind of keep that in mind as we go through the Old Testament, later, when the enemies of Israel begin to attack them, guess who gets attacked first? They do. And guess who's not there to help them? Everybody else. They're the first ones that are run over constantly as people come in and out of Israel to attack it. These people are done, and these are isolated tribes. They're the first to be defeated, they're the first to fall. But they never fully entered in. And, at the time of Jesus, when you go to the country of the Gadarenes - out on that side - they were filled with pig farmers and demon-possessed men, and they wanted Jesus to leave. This used to be a place where the gospel was, in that sense (in the Old Testament sense), but now you find spiritual mediocrity. Far better we press on for God's best than settle for less.

So, let them be a warning to you because I know after five or six years and you go, "Are you still going to church?" "Yeah, I'm going every Wednesday, man, bringing my Bible." "You're still goin'?" "Yeah." "You still readin' your Bible?" "Still readin' it." "You prayin'?" "Yeah, still prayin' every day." "Still sharing your faith?" "Yeah, I gotta do that." Press on. Press on. Resting in God's promises, learning to put God ahead of material pursuits, entering the land, taking more of it by faith, not settling for less. That's really important for us, and it was really important for these guys, indeed.

So I guess my challenge to you is - how much of the land have you possessed? And how much is sitting around you, waiting for you to come? Are you taking leaps of faith? Or are you sitting quietly in the pew and then going home as soon as we're finished? I like Obadiah. There's a verse that says, "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (verse 17). You meet with God, you can get a lot by walking with Him.

One of the over-arching lessons of this book, and the historical action, especially, of the book, was that the children of Israel, as well as this other group (two and a half tribes) settled too quickly for too little. They weren't very patient, and they

left on the table much of what God brought to the table because they weren't willing to press on to get it. It's not good enough to get to heaven, is it? You want to get to heaven with a smile on your face and fruit behind you, don't you? You want to come bursting in, not whimpering in. It's like running the race. You don't want to come in 11th and go, "I finished. Give me that button that says I finished." God's never going to leave you or forsake you, so I think you'll finish. You can stick the button back on Him. He got you there. But wouldn't you like to win? I mean, that's pretty cool and a call to us.

Well, verse 16, "So they answered Joshua," (these two and a half tribes) "saying, 'All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death.' " (And all of a sudden, he's liking these two and a half tribes). " 'Only be strong and of good courage.' " And I think their commitment to Joshua to "be strong and of good courage" is exactly what the LORD said three different times back here. It must have been a good confirmation to him that he needed to do that.

So, dare to believe God. I think that's one of the lessons we learn. Dare to believe God. Your feet can cover a lot of ground. Or you can get satisfied and settle in too quickly and, like this generation, miss out on 90% of everything God has for you. I don't want you to miss out on 90%. But I'll tell you what - you'll never see God answer a prayer for healing if you're not praying for the sick. Never. You can hear it from others. But if you have somebody say, "Hey, can I pray for you?" and then they call you and go, "Man, the Lord healed me!" "He did what?!!" "I prayed. That's right. Me and the Lord, man. We're doin' stuff." You'll never see God provide if you don't have need. You'll never see God go before you if you don't step out. You'll never.....you'll just never. There'll be 90% of the stuff just left on the table! And you'll miss out. And you won't have missed a church service, but you'll have missed a lot. And unfortunately these guys are going to miss a lot. But for now, lots of excitement going forward and people ready to move out.

Next time chapter 2. One chapter should be sufficient. Shall we pray?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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