

Jos204 – Commitment Required – Joshua 1:10-18

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Commitment Required.” We’re looking at Joshua 1, verses 10-18.

God had commissioned Joshua to:

Lead the people into the land,

Defeat the enemy, and

Claim the Promised Life God had given them.

And God had given Joshua his *assurance* and his *promises* to make them *strong and courageous*.

What God did *not* give Israel – was the HOW. God didn’t tell them how. He just promised them he *would* bring it to pass. And then God called them to act on those promises by faith. And now it’s time for Joshua to call the people to a commitment to *take action* on God’s promises.

As we said last message, God’s promises are not a couch to nap on. They are a launch pad to take off from. And to get from the couch to the launch pad, *commitment is required*.

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, show us. We live this parallel truth that everything is from you. Everything is freely given to us from you. It’s all by your grace. It’s all through our faith. And Lord to possess it we must take action. There must be a commitment on our part that requires courageous faith and fearless obedience that is displayed in action. And so we pray today, Lord, that you would just inspire us. That we would be ready to stand, not just spiritually, but physically. That we would be ready to stand in the battle and take the action necessary to see you bring the victory to pass in our lives. Bring it to life to us, through your Word today, and by your Spirit and in your name, Jesus, amen.*

We’ll start today in Joshua 1:10.

Joshua 1:10 (NLT)

10 Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel,

Notice, Joshua didn’t call the leaders of Israel together for a group conference on the HOW or WHY or WHETHER they should act. God’s Word was clear. It was not time for discussion – it was time for action.

At this same place on the edge of the Promised Land forty years ago Israel had tried the congressional rule approach and that entire generation dropped dead in the Wilderness.

One commentator aptly said, ***“Sometimes, to move ahead, there has to first be a FUNERAL”***

And Israel had seen an immeasurable amount of funerals as the faithless generation died in the wilderness. So today Joshua doesn't discuss with his leaders. He simply commands them *on behalf of God*.

And here is what he commands.

Joshua 1:11 (NLT)

11 “Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

Man, there is a lot to digest in that one verse, so we have to take it one bite at a time.

First the officers were sent through the camp to tell the people ***“Get their PROVISIONS ready.”***

This was the beginning of the commitment God required. ***“Get Your STUFF READY - it's time to MOVE FORWARD.”*** The word “provisions” refers most often to food and supplies. And so Joshua was saying – Man, “pack a lunch” because we're crossing the Jordan into the Promised Life.

But wait a minute Joshua. Don't you mean “Pack the boat” because we're going to cross the Jordan? Or don't you mean “Prepare a pontoon bridge” because we're going to cross the Jordan?

What good is packing peanut butter and manna sandwiches? The Jordan is at “flood stage” so you better have some waterproof Tupperware because we're going to be eating those provisions at the bottom of the river.

Have you ever noticed that God doesn't give explanations? He gives commands. But far too often we demand explanations from God. We demand a plan that makes sense to our finite little pea brains.

But God just says, “Pack a sandwich” because I am about to take you through the impossible. I'm about to take you across the un-crossable. And if you will just do what I say your life will be changed forever.

We want a plan – God wants a commitment.

We want to know HOW it is going to get done. God wants to know IF we are going to do it.

One author said, *“I find that doing the will of God leaves me no time for arguing with God about His plan.”*

Is there a chance that God just wants to see if we will actually go pack a lunch when he tells us to? We can either say, *“God that doesn’t make any sense, so I’m not going to do it.”* Or, we can say, *“God that doesn’t make any sense, and I’m going to go do it right away, and do it to the best of my ability.”*

It is not a question of understanding. It’s a question of commitment.

If we are truly committed to a supernatural, miraculous God, then won’t our commitment show in us simply doing what God commands because God has commanded it – not because we understand it?

Commitment is *displayed in action* and a lack of action displays a *lack of commitment*.

There is something bigger going on when God calls us to something we think is impossible. If we will step out in a commitment of action, God will change our lives in the process and we will take possession of *more* of the Promised Life.

So God says (through Joshua) ***Get your provisions ready.***

Then verse 11 says, ***“In three days.”***

This phrase (***“In three days”***) is used a number of times in the preparation of Israel to cross over into the Promised Life because this period of “three days” in the Bible becomes a picture of Death, Burial and Resurrection – especially in the New Testament.

In three days, Israel would pass through a “picture” of death and burial in the Jordan River and then they would be “Born Again” into the Promised Life on the other side.

But remember, we are NOT talking about heaven. We’re talking about the positional *death/burial/resurrection* that’s described in Romans 6:3-11. (Write that reference down.) Through our *identification* with Jesus Christ we have *died* to our old life of wandering in the Wilderness and we have been *buried* with Jesus Christ in baptism, and we have been *raised* “in Christ” to live the new life in him.

We are actually having a baptism after service today, and I hope you can stick around for it – to see this in action. Because this is what Israel is being called to prepare for and be committed to; to die to their Wilderness wanderings and to cross over through a “type” of baptism into the Promised new Life.

Next, (in verse 11), God says, ***YOU WILL cross the Jordan River.***

God says – Get ready – because you are going to cross the un-crossable. THIS is the language of commitment. *You will* do this. *It will happen.* So *get ready.* Do what you need to do because you are about to cross over into the Promised Life. Let there be no doubting, no questioning, but only a commitment to *do* what God has *commanded* because the miracles of the new life are *just on the other side.*

First, verse 11 says ***YOU WILL cross over the Jordan*** and then ***YOU WILL take Possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you.***

And again, notice the details are completely *left out.* Joshua just says you WILL take possession of the Promised Life. But we know it took at least twenty-five years for that to happen. And so it was actually, ***'you will cross over and begin the battles necessary to ultimately take possession of the Promised life.'***

Guys, please hear me.

Taking possession of the Promised Life is *not* a *single event*, like slipping up your hand and repeating a prayer. Taking possession of the Promised Life is walking closer and closer with Jesus, from victory to victory throughout this earthly life.

Walking more and more
in the **FREEDOM**
and the **REFRESHMENT**
and the **REST** - and the **PEACE**
that **ONLY** the **Presence of God** can give.

And to take possession of *THAT* Promised Life – *COMMITMENT is REQUIRED.*

And then, after such a powerful verse 11 about commitment, there comes a reminder of a strange story about two and a half of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. And it's no coincidence that this “reminder” comes immediately after that powerful verse 11 about commitment.

Joshua 1:12-14 (NLT)

12 Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (the 2 ½ tribes). He told them,

13 ***Remember what Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you: ‘The Lord your God is giving you a place of rest. He has given you this land (which land?).’***

14 ***Your wives, children, and livestock may remain here in the land Moses assigned to you on the east side of the Jordan River . . .***

Wait a minute, what’s going on here?

In verse 12, Reuben, Gad and Manasseh are three of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. But notice in verse 14 they are being allowed to stay on the EAST SIDE of the Jordan River. BUT – the Promised Land was entirely on the WEST SIDE of the Jordan River. Why are two and a half Tribes being allowed to stay on the wrong side of the Jordan River?

I’m glad you asked. Turn over to Numbers 21. (I’m going to walk you through it; you just mark it down in Joshua.)

In Numbers Chapter 21 during Israel’s wanderings in the Wilderness, the King of the Amorites (on the East side of the Jordan) attacked Israel. And Israel defeated the Amorites on the East side of the Jordan and took that land *during the wandering*. And then another King from the North, the King of Bashan, also attacked Israel and Israel conquered that land as well.

God NEVER told Israel this land on the EAST side of the Jordan was his Promised Land for them. It was just land they conquered *during* the wandering as a result of those people attacking Israel. And it was the land that Israel was on *at this moment* as they prepared to cross the Jordan into the *true Promised Land*.

Now, turn over to Numbers Chapter 32.

Numbers 32:1–8 (NLT)

1 ***The tribes of Reuben and Gad owned vast numbers of livestock. So when they saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were ideally suited for their flocks and herds, (hold on)***

In that day livestock was money and this land on the wrong side of the Jordan was a good place to grow their money (flocks and herds.)

2 ***they came to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the other leaders of the community. They said,***

(Skip down to verse 5)

5 *If we have found favor with you, please let us have this land as our property instead of giving us land across the Jordan River.* (The Promised Land)

And so - Moses is NOT going to respond 'favorably' to this.

6 *“Do you intend to stay here while your brothers go across and do all the fighting?”
Moses asked the men of Gad and Reuben.*

7 *“Why do you want to discourage the rest of the people of Israel from going across to the land the Lord has given them?”*

8 *Your ancestors did the same thing when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to explore the land.*

Then skip down to verses 13-19 of Numbers 32.

Numbers 32:13–19 (NLT)

13 *“The Lord was angry with Israel and made them wander in the wilderness for forty years until the entire generation that sinned in the Lord’s sight had died.*

14 *But here you are, a brood of sinners, doing exactly the same thing! You are making the Lord even angrier with Israel. (Uh oh)*

And then – verses 16-17.

16 *But they approached Moses and said, “We simply want to build pens for our livestock (money) and fortified towns for our wives and children.*

17 *Then we will arm ourselves and lead our fellow Israelites into battle until we have brought them safely to their land. Meanwhile, our families will stay in the fortified towns we build here, so they will be safe from any attacks by the local people.*

And finally – down to verse 19.

19 *But we do not claim any of the land on the other side of the Jordan (The Promised Land). We would rather live here on the east side and accept this as our grant of land.”*

This is the story of the two and a half Tribes who demanded to live on the wrong side of the Promised Land, and Moses allowed them to do it.

To their credit, they did send their best fighting men to lead the way with the other ten and a half Tribes who crossed over to the real Promised Land, and they stayed with the other ten and a half Tribes until Joshua released them.

But then – when it was over – they returned to the easy life on the wrong side of the Jordan River and there they made their money and they raised their families where things were “easier.” They ended up with great flocks and great herds but very little connection to the God of Israel.

Their commitment (as far as it went) was admirable. But it was short term and it was short hand (they only sent their best troops.) They wanted to help their brethren, but they didn’t want to be in the battle *long term*. Instead, they decided it was “good enough” to be on the border of God’s will and they were happy to live on the border of God’s Promised Life.

God allowed these two and a half Tribes to settle for “second best.” They lived one foot in the Promised Land and one foot in the Wilderness of the world.

And as history panned out, they were:

The first Tribes to embrace Pagan Worship because they weren’t worshipping with the other tribes

The first Tribes to be Attacked by the enemies outside of the Promised Land

The first Tribes to be Taken Into Captivity and dispersed into the World.

THOSE are the two and a half tribes that chose a “borderline commitment” between the Promised Life and the world, and we will certainly see them again.

So, back to Joshua Chapter 1.

Joshua tells the leaders of these two and a half “borderland Tribes” that their families can stay on the wrong side of the Jordan. But he reminds them of their commitment to Moses to join the other tribes in the battle for the Promised Land.

Picking back up in Joshua 1:14-15.

Joshua 1:14-15 (NLT)

14 . . . But your strong warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with them

15 until the Lord gives them rest, as he has given you rest, and until they, too, possess the land the Lord your God is giving them. Only then may you return and settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the Lord, assigned to you.”

Then – continuing in Joshua 1:16.

16 They (most likely meaning the 2 ½ tribes) ***answered Joshua, “We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us.***

17 *We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. And may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses.*

18 *Anyone who rebels against your orders and does not obey your words and everything you command will be put to death. So be strong and courageous!*

Man, those *are* the right words, aren't they? And as far as they go, they're really *good words*.

BUT, today is about commitment to God's plan and God's command. So let's compare the two groups we see here.

The first group we saw in verse 11. They were to just go and get their stuff ready, because in three days (a picture of the resurrected life) they were *absolutely going to cross over* the Jordan, and they were *absolutely going to take possession* of the land (and the life) that God promised them.

The second group we saw in verses 12-18. They were committed to helping the other Tribes take possession of the Promised Land. But then they were also committed to returning to the border land and living “in-between” the promises of God and the allure of the world.

And as we continue in the Book of Joshua we will periodically look back at these two and a half Tribes that settled for God's second best and we will always feel sorry for them because they chose to live with *borderline commitment* – one foot in the Promised Land and one foot in the world. And they will be the first to fall to the false gods of the world and to the enemies that are in the world.

And maybe you would ask yourself why did God allow them to live with one foot in the Promised Land and one foot in the world? But then I guess we'd have to ask ourselves why does God allow so many Christians to *live that way today*?

Let's be strong and courageous and let's get our stuff ready because we are crossing over from the Wilderness to the Promised Life. Not partly. Not temporarily. But *fully and completely*.

God, we want what you have for us – all of it. Not “one foot in” worth. Not just for “a time.”

We want to follow you with *all-in commitment* into the heart of the Promised Life.

Let's pray. Lord, give me the strength to turn my back on the Wilderness and to walk into the life you have for me. Not because I understand it, but because you call me to it. Lord I need you. We need you to inspire us, convict us, show us, Lord. Show us where we're at., and pour out the faith for us to have the commitment that's required to follow you into the Promised Life. We pray for miracles in our lives to do it, for your glory and in your name, Jesus, amen.