

Jos203 – Be Strong And Courageous – Joshua 1:1-9

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Be Strong And Courageous.” We are in the Book of Joshua today and we’ll be looking at the first nine verses.

We are in our third message in our study of the Book of Joshua. The first we introduced the Book of Joshua and the concept. Last message we introduced the person, the hero, of the Book of Joshua. Today, we start the verse-by-verse study.

These first nine verses of Chapter 1 are the key to both *understanding* and *applying* the Book of Joshua. Remember, Joshua is historically about God giving the real land to the real people of Israel.

But, it is also an incredible “type” (an illustration) – an analogy – of what it takes for you and I to “Take Possession of the Promised Life” that has been given to us freely in Jesus Christ. And in these first nine verses is some of the greatest encouragement in the Bible for us to do that.

So let’s pray, and we’ll get into it. *Lord Jesus, as we go, bring to life in us that Yashua was a type of Yeshua of yourself, Lord. Allow us to see the incredible illustrative life changing teachings that you’ve placed in this book and as we look at these key and powerful verses today, please, drive them home and apply them specifically to each person’s life. For your sake, for your glory in our lives, and in your name Jesus, amen.*

In Israel, Moses is revered above every other leader as the greatest leader of all time. But let’s start by looking closely at the passing of the leadership torch from Moses to Joshua in the first two verses of Joshua 1.

Joshua 1:1–2 (NLT)

1 After the death of Moses the Lord’s servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant. He said,

2 “Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them.

There is one transition word between the leadership of Moses and the leadership of Joshua – THEREFORE...

Moses is dead – therefore the time has come for you (Joshua) to lead. Guys, God’s plan does not hinge on any *one leader* (except for Jesus Christ himself). God moves leaders (even as big as Moses) in and out of leadership in order to continue his plan for his

people. God's *work* is sovereign and unchanging, not the leadership of any man (or woman). That is important for every one of us in leadership to get a firm grasp on and we dealt with that truth in last week's message.

But there is an even greater reason that the leadership torch had to be passed from Moses to Joshua. Because Moses is a *type* of the law and Joshua is a *type* of Jesus Christ. Moses *could not* lead the people into the Promised Land because the Law cannot lead people into the Promised Life.

Galatians 3:24 (NKJV)

24 . . . the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The Law (Moses) can *point us to* the Promised Life but it is only Jesus Christ (our greater Joshua) who can *lead us into* the Promised life.

And so Joshua is called to lead the people out of the wilderness into the abundant Promised Land. And along with this calling of Joshua in Chapter 1 are some of the most encouraging verses in all the Old Testament about us entering the Promised Life with COURAGEOUS FAITH and FEARLESS OBEDIENCE.

And the encouragement starts in Joshua 1:3.

Joshua 1:3 (NLT)

3 (The Lord said) I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you

God's promises are unchangeable, they cannot be altered. God has already given Israel *The Promised Land* but they still have to go and set their foot there. Just as God has already given us *The Promised Life* but we must still go set our foot there.

This is a phrase of taking possession. We don't have to earn the Promised Life but we do have to "Take Possession" of it. We have to enter into that place that God has made for us. We have to "make it our own" – we have to *do* what it *takes* to begin to actually *live* in it.

But it was only under the leadership of Joshua that God had given Israel every place they would set their foot. Each time they took a step of faith following YE-SHUA the place where their foot landed, God guaranteed them victory there. But, they didn't get to choose their own way, and they didn't get to follow their own plans and schemes. And God's promise to us of the Promised Life is the same – it comes only as we follow Jesus

Christ (our YE-SHUA). We don't get to choose our own way. We don't get to follow our own plans and schemes.

And there were some of the Israelites who *did* follow Joshua by *faith* and they *did* take possession of the life God promised them. And then there were some who *did not* follow Joshua by *faith* and they *never did* take possession of the life God promised. We get out the first introduction to that truth in the next verse. This is the *amount* of Promised Land God gave to Israel.

Joshua 1:4 (NLT)

4 from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.'

How great was this inheritance God had given Israel? It was MASSIVE. Exactly how massive? We don't exactly know. From Genesis 12 to here in Joshua, the Promised Land is described using different landmarks, some that we know of and some that we don't know of. And so there are different scholarly opinions about how much land this actually was – but it was A LOT!

What *is* perfectly clear is that the Land of Israel we know today is the heart (center) of the land God promised to his people. Although the original Promised Land was substantially larger than what we know as Israel today stretching to the north through Lebanon and even into Syria.

And it is a phenomenal –absolute miracle direct from God – that Israel possesses today a large portion of the original land God gave them. Even though the world (especially through the United Nations) is working hard to give their land to their enemies, God has miraculously brought Israel back into the land and God has miraculously kept them there. And you can easily see that if you do just a little homework on the wars of Modern Day Israel.

Starting in 1948 when five Arab nations joined forces to attack Israel twenty-four hours after Israel became a state and the armies of those five established nations – fighting together – could not overtake the *one day old* State of Israel.

And then - the **Miracles** of the **1967 Six-Day war**
and then - the **Miracles** of the **1973 Yom Kippur war**
and then - the **Miracles** of the **continual attacks** on Israel

from Arab countries and Islamic terrorists.

God's hand can so easily be seen on the God-given right that Israel has in the Promised Land.

That is the historical side of the Book of Joshua which is still unfolding in our present day world.

However – back to the Book of Joshua and our focus on illustrating the Christian life. Israel *never* possessed *all* of the Promised Land. They didn't come close to possessing all of it in the Book of Joshua. The closest they *did come* was during the reign of King David and Solomon when Israel possessed much of the northern Promised Land that is Lebanon today.

God promised Israel that what they would step out in faith and take possession of God would give them. But they never stepped out in faith into a large portion of the Promised Land. And isn't that also true in *our lives* today?

Is there a chance that we are living today in a very small portion of the Promised Life that God has given us today?

It's like the man who was flat broke whose friend paid for him to go on the best luxury cruise ever. But the entire time that the man was on this magnificent cruise he ate only some crackers he had brought with him and drank water from the faucet in his room. By the end of this cruise this man was near dying of starvation because he didn't realize that the unlimited gourmet food on the cruise was all included in the price that had been paid on his behalf.

Is there a chance today that you are on the *boat to heaven* but you are starving for the *promises of God* because you don't realize that all those promises are included in the price that has been paid *on your behalf*?

There is so much more of the *Promised Life* that God wants us to *take possession of*. But far too often we stop seeking, we stop stepping into the blessings of the life God has freely given us.

We MUST NOT become COMPLACENT

We MUST continue to LEAN IN,

We MUST continue to MOVE FORWARD

We MUST continue to FIGHT - the enemies that **KEEP US** from Possessing – ALL that is ours "**In Christ**"

There is more that God wants to give you. But you must pick up your foot – by faith – and take the next step into more of the Promised Life.

In verse 5 God continues to give Joshua (and us) more incredible encouragement to do just that.

Joshua 1:5 (NLT)

5 (1) No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. (2) For I will be with you as I was with Moses. (3) I will not fail you or abandon you.

These are *three* incredible promises made to Joshua. But what is more incredible is that God has made these same three promises – *to us!*

First, God says, ***NO ENEMY will be able to stand against you*** and the New Testament is full of God’s guarantees of *our victory* AS we follow Jesus Christ into the promised life.

The Enemies that we face:

Our own FLESH

The Deceitfulness of this WORLD

and the SPIRITUAL Enemy Forces . . .

Have all been TRIUMPHED OVER by Jesus Christ

Col 2:13-15 says

We’ve been MADE ALIVE in Christ

We’ve been FORGIVEN of our SIN

Our Enemies have been DISARMED and TRIUMPHED OVER

And the VICTORY that is ours “in Christ” is the PEACE and the REST and the FULFILLMENT of the *Promised Life*.

And then, as God says here in verse 5, ***I will be with you as I was with Moses.***

Jesus Christ has said the same thing to us.

Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

20 . . . And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

John 14:16 (NLT)

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (The Holy Spirit), who will never leave you.

And the third promise of Joshua 1:5 is, ***I will not fail you or abandon you.***

And Hebrews 13:5-6 applies this promise to us.

Hebrews 13:5–6 (NLT)

5 . . . For God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.”

6 So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?”

If GOD is *for us* – WHO can be *against us*

Romans 8:37–39 (NLT)

37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.

39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

These promises are for us!!

So, what are we supposed to do with what 2 Peter 1:4 calls these “*exceedingly great and precious promises*”?

Well, in verse 6 we begin to find out what we are supposed to DO with these great promises.

Joshua 1:6(a) (NLT)

6 “Be strong and courageous . . .

In the next four verses these words are used three times. “*Be strong and courageous*” (Three times in four verses.)

What are we supposed to DO with these great promises? “*Be strong and courageous*”

God’s promises are not meant to be a recliner for you to take a nap in. *God’s promises are meant to be a guarantee from which you launch the battle for the Promised Life.* We must meet and defeat the enemy in order to Take Possession of The Promised Life.

In Joshua most of the Tribes of Israel failed to “take full possession” of the Promised Land they were given.

WHY??

For the same reason that God's people today fail to take possession of much of the *Promised Life* because they turned the launch-pad of God's victory into the recliner of mediocrity.

God's promised life for you stretches further than you can imagine. He has victories and blessings waiting out there for you. But you must push ahead by faith – taking ground from the enemy and following Jesus until the sole of your foot steps upon the life God has for you. We must fight the good fight of faith in order to “take possession” of what God has already given us.

God gave this incredible encouragement to Joshua – and the people of Israel – because they had to do something. THERE WAS ACTION that had to be taken.

Continuing in Joshua 1:6,

Joshua 1:6(b) (NLT)

6 . . . for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.

Here we see “THE DO,” the action that had to be taken. Joshua and the people had to “take possession” of the land God had already given them. The victory was guaranteed by God but the battle was about to begin.

And the battle was going to require
COURAGEOUS FAITH and
FEARLESS OBEDIENCE in order to BE SUCCESSFUL.

This is exactly what the next verse tells us.

Joshua 1:7 (NLT)

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.

These are the *conditions* for taking possession of the Promised Life that God has already given us.

The first word of the last sentence is “then.” That makes this a conditional statement. And this is where come of Israel *failed miserably* and this is where some of us *will fail miserably*.

First, WE MUST BE strong and very courageous. We must walk by faith and not be afraid or discouraged.

Then, WE MUST BE careful to obey *all* the instructions we receive from God, not deviating from them, not turning to the right or to the left.

Then (and only then) will we be *successful* in **Taking Possession of the Promised Life.**

We must go into the battle for the Promised Life with COURAGEOUS FAITH in Jesus Christ and FEARLESS OBEDIENCE to the Word of God.

And now, in verse 8, God is going to give us a daily plan that will enable us to walk in that courageous faith and that fearless obedience.

I have to switch to the ESV here to make one thing clear.

Joshua 1:8 (ESV)

8 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.

The NLT translates the first sentence, “***STUDY this book of Instruction continually.***”

But the original is more of “repeating” of the Word of God to yourself. It’s memorizing it and meditating on it and allowing the Word of God to *renew your mind* and thereby *transform your life* (as Romans 12:2 says). And then, as your mind is being renewed Joshua 1:8 says ***be careful to do according to all that is written in it.***

We can’t *just* memorize the Word.

We can’t *just* meditate on the Word.

We must be careful *to do* what we *learn* in the Word.

Renew your mind with the Living Word of God.

Transform your life by doing what it says.

And again we see the conditional word “then”...

then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

God has told us what we must do for the Spiritual victory of us taking possession of the Promised Life and it’s laid out right here for us.

- 1) **We must follow Jesus Christ (our Joshua)** with courageous faith into the battles that lie before us.
- 2) **We must make the Word of God our Daily Bread** feeding on it day and night, meditating on it and allowing it to renew our mind.
- 3) **We must DO what God SAYS** – we must develop *fearless obedience*.

Then, and only then, is our spiritual victory and our “taking possession” of the Promised Life guaranteed.

We have three enemies waging full-scale war against our ability to “Take Possession of the Promised Life.”

Our **FLESH** within us

The **WORLD** around us

The **SPIRITUAL ENEMY** against us

And waiting on the other side of those enemies is the PROMISED LIFE of

- 1) **FREEDOM** from the Bondage of Sin
- 2) **REFRESHMENT**, and **REST**, and **PEACE** for our Souls
- 3) and the **Greatest Reality** of the **TANGIBLE PRESENCE** of **Jesus Christ** in our life.

And all of that as we *walk with him* from victory to victory into the life that he has promised us.

But God doesn't want you to leave today without one more strong encouragement.

Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

9 This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Guys, the greatest part of the Promised Life is that Jesus Christ is *with us wherever we go!* And in Christ are Freedom and Refreshment and Rest and Peace and most of all, his *tangible presence* with us.

And the way we begin to “Take Possession of this Promised Life” is to begin to develop a strong and courageous faith and a fearless obedience to God's Word, and to know that the Lord our God is with us wherever we go.

And Jesus will give us his victory as we follow him one step at a time into the “Promised Life.”

Let's pray. *Lord, your presence is so real, your call is so real, the battle is so real and the victory is so guaranteed. And the promises are so real. And Lord we are on this side of the Jordan and we are not sure. Maybe we don't have courageous faith. Maybe we're walking in complete disobedience instead of fearless obedience.*

Would you just speak to God right now about that? Maybe you're still in sin. Maybe you're still in Egypt. And if you sense that there is a greater life that God has for you then you begin by saying, "*Jesus, be my Lord. Come into my life. Forgive me of my sins. Give me the power to fight this battle Lord. I want the bondage of sin broken. I want to be free from the chains that have me bound to my sin and to this world. I want to experience victory over the enemies. I want to live, Lord, in rest, in peace, in fulfillment – walking with you in the promised life. God come into my life. Fill me with your spirit. Give me the strength to follow you into the unknown. To stand in the face of the battle and to continue to stand in your victory.*"

Lord, take us into the promised life. We'll stand with you and we'll follow you all our days. No matter what comes, no matter what enemy rears its ugly head. We'll stand in your victory and we'll experience the Promised Life with you, Lord. For your glory in our life, Jesus, and in your name, amen.