

Be Strong • Joshua 1:6-9

Read vs1-6 • Set Scene

1. 40. Yrs. / 4 decades Joshua followed & served that great man Moses.
 - a. He'd stood at Moses' side when he parted the Red Sea.
 - b. He'd witnessed the miracle of the manna, the quail, the water from the rock.
 - c. He'd watched Moses skillfully negotiate seemingly impossible challenges to his authority, time & again.
 - d. He'd been in the tabernacle when Moses met and spoke to God.
 - e. Why, Joshua had even gone up Sinai with Moses to receive the 10 Commandments.
2. Now: Joshua is closing in on 80; the age at which Moses became Israel's leader. Now it's **HIS** turn.
3. Moses has stepped aside. It's time for a new leader.
4. Time for Joshua to step out from Moses' shadow; into his place.
5. Imagine Joshua's trepidation at the task before him!
6. Some aspiring leaders think they're ready after 6 months of training.
 - a. They take a class, read a book; and assume they're ready.
 - b. Ambition persuades them if they just had the position, the title, they'd be awesome!
7. Joshua spent 40 yrs being trained by one of history's all-time greatest leaders.
 - a. When the time came for **him** to lead, he hesitated. He was uncertain.
 - b. We know that because of what God tells him.
 - c. In fact, what he tells Joshua again and again. Look

⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. 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. . . . ⁹ 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."

1. 3 times God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. Which tells us, Joshua ***wasn't!***
2. As Israel's leader, he ***NEEDED*** to be. Because of God's presence and power, he ***COULD*** be.
3. But he didn't ***start*** there. In himself, Joshua's natural inclination was to be weak and timid.

What's He Afraid Of?

1. Think about it: What's Joshua afraid of? What's he worried about that God has to encourage him so?
 - a. What's the cause of his weakness?
 - b. The Canaanites, Hivites, Perrizites, Hittites, & Amorites?
 - c. The gaints the Canaanites hired as mercenaries, professional warriors to defend them?
 - d. Is he worried about the massive fortresses of Jericho in the S & Hazor up N?
2. No!
 - a. Joshua was 1 of the spies who'd recon'd Canaan 40 yrs earlier.
 - b. He knew all about those challenges & ***urged*** the people of Israel to ***go take it***.
 - c. It was their failure to do so, their unbelief and distrust in God that resulted in their spending the next nearly 40 yrs ***literally*** wandering in circles in the wilderness.
3. No. Joshua's not worried about Canaan. What troubles him is the ***people*** he's leading there.
 - a. Over the last 40 yrs he's seen them do nothing but give Moses grief.
 - b. Delivered from the slave pits of Egypt, they accuse Moses of taking them to the desert so Pharaoh's army can kill them there.
 - c. They complain Moses wants to starve them all.
 - d. Then, when God miraculously provides manna, they complain how bored with it they are.
 - e. Just days after ***hearing*** God's voice announce the 10 Commandments,
 - 1) ***Seeing*** His glorious presence resting on top of Mt Sinai in a roiling cloud of fire,
 - 2) What do they do? They set up a golden calf & throw a drunken orgy.
 - f. Later, Korah and his pals decide they can do a better job of leading than Moses and stage a rebellion.
 - 1) When God shows His choice of leader by causing a sink hole to open under Korah's feet,
 - 2) The people grouse about it.

- g. The list goes on and on. It's 40 yrs long.
 - h. But what really stood out for Joshua was the memory of standing before the people after having returned from scouting Canaan.
 - 1) Showing them the fruit of the land, describing it's riches & urging them to go up and take it.
 - 2) But them balking at the report of giants and walled cities.
 - 3) Despite the fact God said He'd go with them and fight for them.
 - i. After all God had done to prove His faithfulness – they **STILL** would not trust Him.
 - 4. Well, here they are 40 yrs later back at the border & it's "**Take 2.**"
 - 5. Joshua wonders; Will they balk or obey?
 - 6. God knows his thoughts and comes with encouragement.
- ⁶ 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. 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.
- 1. Take note **where** God told Joshua to direct his strength and courage.
 - a. Not in battle with Canaanites.
 - b. It was in making sure God's Word stayed central in his & Israel's life.
 - 2. Israel's real threat wasn't Jericho & Giants. // It was unbelief; refusing to trust & obey God.
 - 3. This is what most of Deut we just finished, was about.
 - a. Knowing his time as their leader was closing, Moses repeatedly called Israel to obey God.
 - b. Their success depended on it.
 - c. God tells Joshua **HIS** priority needs to be in the same place.
 - d. Victory in Canaan is less a matter of strategy & tactics as it is obedience to God.
 - e. It's not that they won't fight; they will.
 - f. But before they wield a metal sword, they need to lay hold of the Sword of the Spirit – God's Word.
 - 4. We see this in their very first challenge at Jericho.
 - a. Joshua heads out of Israel's camp at Gilgal to get the lay of the land around Jericho and plan his attack.
 - b. God appears and **gives** him the plan It's the strangest siege in history.
 - c. They aren't to ring the city with troops; build ladders & towers, then storm the walls in a massed assault.
 - d. The army of Israel was to **walk** around the city once a day for 6 days. Then on the 7th, 7 times.
 - e. Then they're all to shout, and the walls will fall.
 - 5. Think about what went thru each man's mind as they headed out for their daily hike round Jericho.
 - a. Joshua told them not to talk. The only sound as they made their circuit was priests blowing rams' horns.
 - b. Day 1: "Man! That wall's tall. Are we going thru or over it?"
 - c. Day2: "Maybe we'll attack the gate. No. It's HUGE. No ram is going to knock it down."
 - d. Day3: "I've got it; tunnels! We'll go UNDER the wall."
 - e. Day4: "Here we go again. How is marching **around** Jericho going to defeat it?"
 - f. Day5: "Again—Really? This is ridiculous."
 - g. Day6: "Has Joshua lost his mind? We ought to be rushing AT Jericho, not walking around it."
 - h. Day7: "We're walking around the city **HOW MANY TIMES TODAY?**
 Because we've already done it 6 times and **Nothing's Happened.**
 What makes you think anything's going to be different today?"
 - i. End of Day7: "THAT was A-MAZE-ING!"
 - 6. When the walls fell and Israel defeated the mighty fortress of Jericho, they ALL knew –
 Doing what God says **Leads to Success.**
 - a. It may take a while. But it will.
 - b. 6 days Israel obeyed and Jericho still stood.
 - c. There will be days we obey & don't see any result.
 - d. God's not a genie we command // His Word no magic formula we work for a treat.
 - e. But God **always keeps His promises** and He's promised to reward obedience with blessing.

7. If Israel had employed the methods of the day, that is, the ways of the world, in laying siege to Jericho, casualties would have been high.

- a. As it was, there were none!
- b. The lesson was clear: Obey God.
- c. And **KEEP ON** obeying Him even when there isn't an immediate payoff.
- d. Because reward-day is coming **when all will see** what God does for those keep His Word.

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. 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.

1. **We** need this word of encouragement from the Lord. I need it, as do you.
2. I need it as your pastor & a leader of God's people.
 - a. Not because, like Israel, you're hard to lead. On the contrary, you're a delight!
 - b. I count myself blessed to be pastor of this church.
 - c. But: Many are the voices both inside and outside Christendom calling for compromise.
 - 1) Saying Jesus is the Only Way is now severely frowned on.
 - 2) Calling sin—"Sin" is labeled hate speech.
 - 3) Standing for Biblical morality is deemed judgmental; and is some quarters, unacceptable!
3. Here's what's happening . . .
 - a. Man's problem is sin. The Gospel is the solution.
 - b. But people aren't going to need or want a solution to a problem they don't see; they don't feel.
 - c. So satan tries to **blunt** the conviction of sin the Holy Spirit brings by redefining sin as something else.
 - 1) It's not sin; it's an alternative lifestyle.
 - 2) It's not sin; it's what you have to do to get along today.
 - 3) How could it be sin when it's legal?
 - d. Pastors are under huge pressure today to compromise & de-sin sin.
 - e. When they do, the Gospel is no longer the Good News of Salvation because there's nothing to be saved **from**.
 - f. Christianity becomes little more than tune to whistle in the dark; offering no hope.
 - g. The Church = Irrelevant.
4. My task is to lead you into Canaan, the place of God's promised blessing.
 - a. There's no doing that other than by staying true to this. All of it.
 - b. No compromise. No clever messing with the text to make it say something else.
 - c. No fancy-dance around the clear commands of God.
 - d. I admit, it's not always easy seeing how obeying God results in the blessing He promises.
 - e. But Jericho's walls are still in ruins.
5. I've watched dozens of times over the years how when people hang on to God and steadily obey Him, He comes through.
6. Hang on Christian. Stay true. Be strong. Be courageous.
 - a. Those walls that seem so high, so thick –
 - b. You keep walking with God. They WILL come down.