

Special Series

the Call of God – Joshua

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, be our sanctuary of peace and security within this world of jumbled emotions, confusing situations, mixed up rights and wrongs, and unknown futures. Thank You for the assurance of eternal peace with God the Father by means of Your death and Resurrection; for this is our Faith, our sure hope and certain destiny. AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Ask the Lord for the blessing of His healing and sustenance, for all those in your family who need help

On-going prayers

- **Pray for persecuted Christians** *Pray today for young Christians, the children of Christian parents, who find it hard to live their faith at school*
- *Pray for the people of North Korea who live under oppression*
- *Give thanks to God for the joy of sight, and how it enriches life*

Meditation

Lord Jesus, grant me the gifts and graces I need to do Your will;
May I be a faithful disciple of Yours, and may I

accept the nature of the life I have been given;
refrain from jealousy about the gifts of others;
hold my tongue so that I might not hurt others;
smile to show my true delight, and not falsely;
question my own motives and put others first;
conquer my anger before it can conquer me;
give attention to all so they know they are heard;
strive to be a peacemaker, and a person of love,

Complete this work of grace in me so that I may become more like You,
Christ Jesus, my Saviour and my Lord.

Bible passage – Joshua 1:1-9

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said this to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant;

² 'My servant Moses is dead. Now, you and all this people, get ready to cross over the Jordan into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³ Everywhere that you will place your feet I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and the Lebanon here as far as the great river (the Euphrates), and all the land of the Hittites as far as the Great Sea in the West. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not leave you or forsake you.

⁶ 'Be strong and courageous; for you will put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, and be careful to do everything according to the law my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the

right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this book of the law leave your speech; you will meditate on it day and night, so that you are careful to do everything written in it. Then you will become prosperous, and you will be successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'

Bible Study

Review

At the end of Deuteronomy, God took His servant Moses to Mount Nebo (Deut 34:1f.), where he died. Moses had been Israel's enigmatic and powerful leader for a long time, through the extraordinary Exodus (Ex 12-14) and the formative years of the nation's life whilst travelling in the desert (as in Exodus 16f., Numbers and Deuteronomy). Moses was a unique man of God and leader of the people, but who would come after him? The answer is that God had been preparing someone to take over from Moses; and this was Joshua, the son of Nun (Josh 1:1f.). It is not easy for us to understand, but in ancient times, the power vacuum created when a great leader passed away could be disastrous. A quick succession was necessary, and God moved swiftly to appoint Joshua with a prophetic word which connected Joshua seamlessly with the rule of Moses (Josh 1:1,2).

We have already met Joshua in previous stories of Israel's wilderness experiences. He led the people of Israel against the Amalek (Exodus 17:9f.), accompanied Moses on his spiritual pilgrimages up various mountains (see 24:13 etc.), and was one of the 'spies' who entered the Promised Land. At the time, Joshua advised entering the land, but the people were scared because of the presence in Canaan of 'Nephilim', who appeared to them to be huge (Numbers 13:33). As a consequence, Joshua escaped the great judgement that came on Israel because of this sin of unbelief (Numbers 14:1f.). Joshua was a man marked by the favour of God (Deut 3:28, 31:3f. etc.), so when Moses died and Israel stood poised to enter the Promised Land, Joshua was ready and willing to step into Moses' shoes.

Joshua may have been ready and willing, but he still needed God's specific blessing and anointing for service. Just as Moses met with the Lord at the burning bush (Exodus 3) and was commissioned to act, so God spoke to Joshua here at this critical moment of time in Israel's history. He was given a specific commission to complete the work of Moses and bring the people into the Promised Land (1:2-5), and to do this, he was given the blessing of God's presence (1:5). Then, to complement this, God spoke to Joshua to give him a personal word (1:6-9). He was told to be '*strong and courageous*' (1:6,7,9), and was also told to keep the 'Book of the Law' close at hand, physically and spiritually (1:7,8). The last words of this commission have now become famous; '*be strong and courageous, do not be frightened or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*' (1:9).

The commission of Joshua was a remarkable event, because God revealed to Joshua the extent of the Promised Land and the area of land he had to conquer to fulfil the commission (1:4,5). The description of the Promised Land found here is very different from the vision given to Abraham (13:10,14), and also different from the land eventually invaded by Joshua (see at the end of Joshua and the beginning of Judges). In reality, the promise of God was never acquired in full, despite the valiant efforts of Joshua; but Joshua himself need this great promise of God to enable him to take on the great task of winning a homeland for the people of Israel.

The most interesting feature of God's call and commission of Joshua is the combination of a threefold command of God to be strong (1:6,7,9) and the command to keep close to the laws of God. The promise of God was that if Joshua kept God's laws and did so with boldness, then he would become '*prosperous ... and successful*' (1:8). Now it is too easy for some to suggest from this that if we are completely loyal to the Lord and do His will boldly today, then we will have the same rewards. However, we must remember that Joshua was not called to personal benefits. The result of 'success and prosper' was for God's people as a whole, not for Joshua personally, as later generations of Israelites discovered.

Nevertheless, we can learn from the call of God to Joshua, which required him to be obedient and utterly grounded in God's law. The scrolls he obtained from Moses were the only 'Scripture' of the day (1:8), and even in those times, God required that it be a natural part of Joshua's speech and thought at all times. We too, can learn to be God's people by being obedient to the revelation He has given us in Christ, and being people who are grounded in the His Word as we now have it, which is the Bible.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What can we learn from this passage today about obedience? What obedience does our Lord God require of His people today?
2. The church is sometimes coy in talking about 'success'. What success should we seek, and how should we go about it?
3. How does this passage of scripture assist the faith of ordinary Christians today?

Topics covered by this text

- *Strength and courage as God's servants*
- *God's call to obedience and to knowing Scriptures*
- *God's promise to reward our faithfulness*

Personal comments by author

I find it fascinating that God called Joshua to be someone who was immersed in the Word of God. Joshua only had the works of Moses by which to know God's ways, possibly in the form of a scroll, but God knew that this was sufficient for him. Joshua needed to be single minded and clear in his vision, and God gave him clear and precise instructions; how often do we long for life to be that simple! We often make life more complex than it need be, when our Lord has a clear plan for us if we would but follow it! One thing is certain, however, which is that being courageous and strong is important, but perhaps not the heart of Christian faith. However important these characteristics truly are, it is more important to start with obedience to God's Word.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *How do you go about being a man or woman of God's Word? We hear the Lord speak to us in many different ways today, and scripture itself tells us to listen to the preached Word, to read the written Word, to live with Jesus the Word and to study the revealed Word. How do you know what God's Word for you is? Look for a specific and prayerful answer to your question!*
- *Pray for all who need true leadership today. Many of God's people languish for want of a good and godly leader, so pray for those who train leaders and those who are called to leadership.*

Final Prayer

Thank You, heavenly Father, for the call that You have placed upon our lives. You have loved us, given us Your love, and revealed Your truth to us; help us therefore to give you the best of our time and energy so that we may be used in Your service. All praise to You, heavenly Father. AMEN
