

Transitions

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn to the book of Joshua. Tonight we're looking at the first nine verses. So we have the first five books of the law and then Joshua.

The first nine verses. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' aid, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now then, you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them, to the Israelites.

I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon and from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country to the great sea on the west.

No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

[1 : 05] Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous.

Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged.

For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Well, transitions can be very difficult. Going from single to married can be full of challenges.

[2 : 10] You're excited to be married, but on the other hand, you could be really asking yourself, am I ready for this? Can I do this? I know I was excited to be married, and yet on my wedding day, I woke up at six in the morning and went to Walmart to buy Pepto-Bismol.

Well, I'm excited, but asking those difficult questions, am I really ready for this? Going from one job to another can be frightening.

Moving into a different stage. Taking on new challenges. Moving from theory into practice. I talked to Keelan this morning, and I got her permission to share this story, but she's been studying phlebotomy, learning to take blood.

She's been studying it in theory, and pretty soon in the coming weeks, she's going to be going from theory into practice, where she's going to have to now stick 100 people and get blood.

So what she's been studying is going to be moved into the practical of having someone sitting there, and she said she feels nervous about that.

[3 : 29] Theory and practice are very different, and so if she's nervous, you can't hardly blame her. Launching into anything that you've never done can be nerve-racking. It's a real test of faith.

Is God going to be there? Is he going to do what he said? Are his promises enough? Is enough. So we've all been there. Transitions.

There are always tests. There are always testing us, and that's what we have here in Joshua 1. We have a time of transition. It's a moment of transition, and Joshua 1 is a transition chapter.

A.W. Pink points out that in the Hebrew, it begins with the word and. So, and, after the death of Moses, and so on.

You usually don't start a sentence with the word and, and you really usually don't start a whole book with the word and, but that's how Joshua begins.

[4 : 30] It begins mid-sentence, as it were, like in the middle of something, and indeed Joshua is in the middle of what is going on. The last chapter of Deuteronomy is all about the death of Moses.

His death. And so just look at the last verse of Deuteronomy. In my Bible, it's just right above it. The last verse of Deuteronomy.

It says, For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight.

Of Israel. Moses. No one has been like him. Mighty power. Awesome deeds. That Moses is dead. And Israel now is getting ready to face their hardest challenge yet. And Moses is dead.

[5 : 34] So they're about to cross the Jordan. They're about ready to take on seven nations greater and stronger than they are. There are cities in front of them. There are hostile kings in their path.

There are giants. There are giants. Literal giant warriors in the land. And Moses, the one who no one had seen anyone like him before, is dead.

Dead. And that's where Joshua is. That's where Joshua one begins with an incredible challenge in front of them. And the greatest of them.

Now dead. That's where Israel is. It's a time of fear. It's a time of real internal questioning. Moses is gone. Can we do this?

So we've all been there. That new job. That new ministry. That new challenge. That new trial. And we ask, how am I ever going to make it? Can I do this?

[6 : 40] So, if you're a widow, in those first weeks and months, you must have asked those questions.

How can I do this? That's something really big. Huge transition. A lot of times, though, it's a little thing. Little transitions.

Getting that new job. Which in the big scheme of things, it's big, but it's not that big. Doing something new. Taking on a new ministry.

Somebody asked you to do something, and you have the courage, and you say yes, and now you're wondering, should I have said yes? I don't know if I can handle that. I faced something like that just a few months ago when I did a youth retreat in Grand Rapids.

And I don't see myself as this gregarious, great youth speaker. I've never put together a conference series. I don't know what I'm doing.

[7 : 45] And I've never done anything like it. And that's where Joshua is. He's just like us. He's going into a new situation, and you can tell by what the Lord is saying to him that Joshua is having some second thoughts.

He's really questioning. This is a little bit harder for him than maybe he thought it was going to be. He's a man just like us. He had been the hand-picked successor of Moses.

He knew that he was going in to have this role. He knew he was going to be the man when Moses died, but he'd never actually done that before.

He'd never actually woken up to the reality that I'm the leader now, and I have this huge challenge in front of me. He knew the day was coming, but now here it is. And sometimes all the prep and all the knowing that you're going to be experiencing something, it doesn't completely prepare you for the fact that now that day is here.

It's time to get up and go. And it's right then that Yahweh, the great I am that I am, the one who does not die, speaks.

[9 : 00] And what a word this is to Joshua. It's a great comfort and hope for this time of fear and questions and anxiety.

And you can see what he says. Look at verse 2. Moses, my servant, is dead. God acknowledges the elephant in the room.

He puts the anxiety right there on the table for everyone to see. He's not afraid to look at it square in the face. He's not afraid to bring it up.

He doesn't need to dance around it. He doesn't need to ignore it or downplay it. And you know that that too can be a real comfort. When someone is willing to stare the problem in the face, bring it up, and is not ignoring it, not pretending like it's not there, God isn't running from the problem at all.

He says, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now then you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan into the land I'm about to give to them, to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot as I promised Moses.

[10 : 13] So here's our first lesson. This is the first lesson from this passage. That God's servants die, but God's promises don't.

God's servants die, but God's promises don't. God's plans aren't thwarted by the death of His servants. What He says He's going to do is in no way affected at all by the death of even someone like Moses.

Jesus. So, that's our first lesson. God's servants die, but God's promises don't. So did Jesus quit building the church when Stephen was stoned?

Or when James was beheaded? Did He say, oh, I didn't see any of that coming. I needed those guys. Let's just go to plan B. Let's do something else. No.

Jesus kept on building His church from Jerusalem to the very ends of the earth. and actually those things He used. We can multiply examples endlessly.

[11 : 17] Did God abandon Timothy when Paul, his mentor, died? Was that the end for Timothy? Was that the end of Timothy's work? Was that the end of the church?

No. Augustine's death didn't end the gospel light. Missionary after missionary died in Africa in the 19th century, in the 1800s.

They would go to Africa and the lifespan was something like two years. You landed on the coast and most people only lived two years on average.

That meant a lot of people lived a lot less and some people lived a lot longer. But the death of all of those servants, it didn't stop the gospel at all in the 19th century.

There was never a shortage of missionaries. The lost were saved. The darkness broke. And just as Jesus said He would, Jesus kept building His church.

[12 : 21] So God's servants die, but God's promises don't. We could even apply it to ourselves. We love Pastor Bob.

We respect and honor him as a servant of God. But his death did not put a period in an end statement and finish Grace Fellowship Church.

He kept building his church. He keeps doing it. And that's the truth that God brings to Joshua and to Israel. Yes, Moses was unique. It is the Holy Spirit who said there was no one like Moses saying that.

Yes, Moses was unique. And yes, he's gone. But I'm still here. That's what God is saying.

Yes, he's gone, but I am still here. My word is still good. That was the past. This is now, and it's time to get up and go. Go. It's time to get moving.

[13 : 26] And so brothers and sisters, no one, not a single one of us, is indispensable. That means not a single one of us is God so needing or attached to that he can't do without.

And that's a relief. You don't ever have to think that I am the absolute last one. One. I'm the absolutely necessary one.

The church just can't do without me. No one has to think that. And it's not true. No one needs to think that God's plans end when someone exits stage left.

We don't ever want to get to the place, and listen to me, we don't ever want to get to the place where we put so much trust or hope in a leader that the whole work here grinds to a halt when he dies or she dies.

That's not faith. Faith doesn't look to the leader. Faith looks to the God of that leader. Faith says God is still here.

[14 : 43] God is the ever-present help. And though some people are off the stage, God is still very much on the stage. He is not dead. His word has not failed.

And so until Christ comes back, the only way is forward. There can be no sitting on the banks of the Jordan saying we can't move on. We can't get on with things. We can't go until there's another Moses.

There wasn't going to be another Moses. There was not going to be another Moses like him. There was a Joshua, and Joshua is the next generation.

Moses' days were over. His work was completed, but God still says it's time to go. It's time to get up and go. He says, I will give you the land, and your territory will extend from the desert in the south to Lebanon, from Euphrates to the Mediterranean.

Verse 5 says, No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life, or no man will be able to stand up against you. No man will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life.

[15 : 49] Now think about what Joshua was thinking when he thought, or when he heard, no man is going to be able to stand up against you. Because at that moment, in the land of Canaan, there were at least, it was full of kings, and armies, and cities.

And these kings weren't just going to pack up their bags and leave. These kings weren't just going to hand over the keys of their kingdoms to Joshua just because they asked. But God says they won't be able to stand up against you.

Now, turn over to Joshua chapter 12. Joshua chapter 12. And I want you to see, or begin to see, what Joshua is really all about.

This whole book is the fact that not a single one of God's promises will fail. And here's this promise to Joshua, no man is going to be able to stand up against you. Now, look at what it says in verse 7. These are the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered. And then it gives a description of all the land and all the people.

[17 : 05] Now, look at verse 9. The king of Jericho, won. The king of Ai, won. The king of Jerusalem, won.

And on, and on it goes, down to verse 24. 31 kings in all. Now, if you're reading Joshua and your devotions and you're wondering, why, why is this here?

Why bother with the king of Tephua, one, the king of Hefer, one, the king of Aphek, one, and on and on. Why all that? No man will be able to stand up against you.

31 kings rose up against Joshua. And at the end of the season, Joshua's record is 31 and 0. He's undefeated.

God said he would be. God said all the way back in chapter 1 that no man will be able to stand up against you. And now years later and battle after battle later, city after city later, Joshua's undefeated.

[18 : 25] God's, God kept His promise. Now turn back to chapter 1. Turn back to chapter 1 and look at verse 5. Why was Joshua so great?

Why is He going to go on to defeat all of these kings and just go from victory to victory to victory? Well, look at verse 5. God says, just like I was with Moses, I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. And here's the second lesson.

we can do anything if God is with us. We can do anything if God is with us. We talked about those trials, those tests, those transitions.

We talked about taking on new challenges and new ministries and experiencing new, harder things, new tests, anything like that. And what God says to us here is, you can do anything if I'm with you.

[19 : 42] You can go through all of those if I'm with you. Joshua, you're going to face all those giants. You're going to lead this people. You're going to conquer nation after nation because I am going to be with you.

Now, Joshua faced kings. Joshua took cities. Joshua fought an alliance in the kings of the north and he fought an alliance of the kings of the south.

And so, when one king couldn't win, a bunch of them got together and he beat all of them. But Joshua kept fighting.

When all the kings in the north got together, he marched out against the kings of the north. And when all the kings of the south got together, he marched out against the kings of the south. Joshua marched out.

He marched out because he believed what God told him here. That I am going to be with you. And so, it didn't matter the numbers. It didn't matter the opposition.

[20 : 42] It didn't matter the size of the walls or the size of the men. He believed, I will never leave you nor forsake you. And God proved it over and over and over again.

He proved it over and over again that if God is with you, you can do anything. You can do anything that he gives you to do. Do we need Moses?

Not if we have God. Do we need to run and hide from those challenges? Not if we have God.

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob.

Blessed is the man who can say, the Lord is my fortress, is my refuge, an ever-present help. And all of this is true, not just for Joshua. This is true for you.

This is true for me. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Is that just a promise that was like, that just had Joshua's name on it? Specifically written to him and to no one else?

[21 : 46] Well, Hebrews in the New Testament, talking to New Testament believers, lifts it right out of Joshua, lifts it right out of Deuteronomy where God had already said it, and he says to those New Testament believers, never will I leave you.

Never will I forsake you. And so we say with confidence, this is what Hebrews goes on to say, so we say with confidence, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. what can man do to me? That promise given to Joshua, it's sort of like the name is erased and your name is put there.

Your challenge, whatever you're facing, this promise is for you. And so what trial, what hard duty, what battle against sin, what besetting sin, what hard providence, this promise is for you. God says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. And that makes all the difference. That makes all the difference for when my spouse dies or when my job gets rocky or when God keeps piling ministry onto my plate.

[23 : 07] It makes all the difference when you're in hand-to-hand combat with the devil. It makes all the difference when you're lonely. It makes all the difference when the whole world seems to be saying that you should be anxious.

This is too much for you. No, I can do anything if God is with me. That's the second lesson of Joshua chapter one. You're going to be able to do anything because I'm going to be with you. And so it's this promise. It's this promise that meets us at the crossroads of our lives so many times. So we have the fight on the right, on my right here. We have the fight to the right or we have surrender and retreat on the left. And the promise, it stands over the road to the right. Yeah, there's a fight this direction, but there's that promise that says I will be with you. And so we either believe the promise or we don't.

[24 : 14] We either take God at his word or we don't. We either shrink back, we turn around, or we go on. But Hebrews says we're not those who shrink back.

We are not of those who shrink back. And so I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I can go where he sins. I can face those giants.

So young people, you can face those giants that you heard about on the ski retreat. You can fight and you can win and you will win if you're one of God's because God is with you.

Older people, we have our own giants. our own giants, our own hostile kings. One is just even the giant of old age getting older.

There's a funny Norse myth about Thor. You know, Thor, the god of thunder and Norse mythology. And the old Vikings used to love to tell it to each other because it was a very funny, amusing story.

[25 : 29] And basically the story is Thor, who's this mighty thunder god, you know, who can beat up anyone, he goes to dinner with a bunch of giants.

And at dinner he boasts that he can beat anyone who challenges them. He can beat them in a wrestling match, anyone who challenges them. And so the giants send out for this old, old lady. She's just a little thing, a little old lady. And Thor wrestled with her. And eventually she pinned him. And of course Thor is so embarrassed.

How could this mighty god, god of thunder, get beat by an old lady? But it's later revealed that that old lady's name was Old Age.

And no one can wrestle with old age and win. But this is what I want to say. Thor isn't God. Thor didn't have our God.

[26 : 32] Thor didn't have our Christ. You very well could be, and we all will be, eventually wrestling the giant of old age. But we are not wrestling her alone.

They will bear fruit even down to old age. Evergreen. And yes, old age and death are going to win the first round.

But this isn't a match with only one round. Because Jesus overcame death and bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave he arose, and there he stands in victory.

Death has lost its grip on me. So we're wrestling death wrestling old age. And yet, because of Jesus Christ, and because of this promise, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

He doesn't leave his holy one in the grave. He doesn't leave us there. He doesn't leave us in the sick room. He's there in the nursing home. He's there on the deathbed.

[27 : 42] He doesn't leave us for a moment. And so we say, where, oh death? Where, oh death, is your victory? Where, oh death, is your sting? But thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. it's this promise that the Lord is going to even be with us in death that should encourage us to keep working even while we're getting older.

While we begin to see things undone and we wonder, is it worth it? Is it worth it? And the Lord says, I'm not going to leave you. Resurrection is for you.

So always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, wholehearted, sold out. And that sounds very much like God's word to Joshua. Be strong and courageous.

Be strong and courageous. And that's what God says again and again to Joshua. It's not just here. He started saying this all the way back when Moses was alive.

[28 : 51] He would say to Joshua, Joshua, you're going to be the next man. So be strong and courageous. And now he says it again and he's going to say it again after this.

Be strong and courageous. And so here's our third lesson. God calls everyone. God calls every one of us to courageous action.

God calls every one of us to courageous action, to movement forward, to new territory, to new fresh obedience, to take those giants on.

He calls every one of us, to courageous action. And he says it again and again. Don't be discouraged. Don't be terrified. God exhorts him.

God prods him. God pokes him. God encourages him. God cheers him on. I'm here. I'm here with you. But you can't shrink back. You can't sit here in quivering fear.

[29 : 51] You can't sit here and do nothing. You have to take the land. It's a perfect picture of the Christian life.

It's a perfect picture of eternal life. So I have a question for you. Eternal life. Is it a gift?

Or is it a reward? Well, the gift of God is eternal life. Romans 6. 23. Heaven is a gift.

But just like we saw from Paul a couple of weeks ago, eternal life is a crown. 2 Timothy 4.8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

Is it a gift? Or is it a reward? It's both. earth. No one, no one gets to sail to heaven on beds of ease.

[31 : 04] You either sail through bloody seas, you are either strong and courageous, or you don't make it. You don't get there.

There's a scene in Pilgrim's Progress in an interpreter's house where a group of people are waiting to enter a palace. But the palace is guarded by armed men.

And at that gate to that palace there's a man with a pen and a paper ready to take down anyone's name who wishes to enter into the palace. And there was a great group that stood around afraid to enter.

And then one came forward and he said, put my name down, sir. And he put his helmet on and he drew his sword and he rushed to the door and the guard started attacking him with deadly force.

But listen to what it says. But that man, not at all discouraged. Hear the echoes of Joshua? Not at all discouraged. He fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely and at last he cut his way through.

[32 : 07] And when he does, a pleasant voice rang out of the palace. Come in, come in, eternal glory, thou shalt win.

heaven is a gift of God. But it's a gift given to the courageous, to those who win it.

Book of Revelation says, on the outside are the cowardly. That one sticks out to me because it's not like all the other ones, like witchcraft.

idolatry. I can see those are going to keep you out of heaven. But Revelation says, outside are the cowards. And so again, listen to me, young people.

Cowardice will keep you out of heaven as much as murder. Cowardice will keep you out of heaven as much as witchcraft and sexual immorality.

[33 : 18] You can make it through your whole life without murdering, without committing adultery. You can be as nice as can be. But if you are not strong and courageous, you won't make it to heaven.

Christians are 50% soldiers. And so God's word to Joshua is his word to you. Heaven is there. It's waiting to be taken.

It's waiting for you to storm its gates. So be strong and courageous and take it. Take it. Win it. And your friends are going to look at you sideways.

People are not going to understand your life. You might have to fight the whole world and you probably will. And the devil will turn his eye upon you. And just like Apollyon stood across Pilgrim's path, he'll stand across your path.

But Pilgrim fought him and he fought him thinking this, I have no armor on my back. If I run, I am dead. And that's just Jesus' words.

[34 : 24] If you try to save your life, you will lose it. Heaven is not for the cowardly. Heaven is for the brave.

On the throne of that place is a brave king who for the joy set before him endured the cross and scorned its shame. On the throne of that place is a brave king who went eyeball to eyeball with people who were going to kill him, the Sanhedrin, and eyeball to eyeball with Pilate and King Herod, and he didn't flinch.

He went to the cross. He went beaten. He went bloodied. He went weak. But he didn't go a coward. And his word to you, his word to me, is come, follow me. God called Joshua to be strong and courageous, and so Joshua put on his helmet, he drew out his sword, and he rushed into Canaan, and God was with him the whole way, and he won.

And so, young people, I'm calling you this evening to join Joshua, join Jesus, join your brothers and sisters in this fight. Hell is for cowards.

[35 : 52] Heaven is for the brave, and so you have to win the prize. And older people, the word is, don't be discouraged. You have fought a long time.

Don't lose heart now. Rest is coming. It's closer than it was before. And pretty soon you will say with Paul, I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. All past tense. All glorious past tense.

And one day, very soon, very soon, it will all be past tense for you. Let's pray. God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that it's clear. We thank you that it's encouraging. We thank you that it's convicting. Will you please forgive us for our lack of commitment and lack of heart, for being half hearted about winning heaven.

[36 : 58] Thank you that you do forgive us, but please help us to be more wholehearted creatures, more wholehearted followers of Jesus.

Help these words, these truths to buoy us, to supply us, to encourage us in the week that is to come. We will have our challenges and we will have our trials and we will have our tests and our transitions and new things will be thrown at us.

And Lord, we need to remember that you are there and that we can do anything if you're with us. And so I pray that you would please, by your spirit, come and remind us of those truths in those moments.

In those moments when we need them, remind us of them. And Lord, I pray for the lost. They would see that the way they are going is no way to go at all. The end of it is death.

And yet there is this glorious, wonderful calling that God, that the Lord Jesus is speaking and preaching throughout the whole earth to come and follow him.

[38 : 13] So I pray that you would give them ears and hearts that would be stirred to want to follow King Jesus. It's in his name I do pray.

Amen.