

How to Act in Changing Times

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[0 : 0 0] 40 years after being redeemed out of Egypt, coming through the desert, and now on the border of the Promised Land.

We read of Moses' death and of Joshua being commissioned to lead them into the Promised Land. Joshua 1. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' aide, 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 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 : 1 1] 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. So Joshua ordered the officers of the people, Go through the camp and tell the people, Get your supplies ready.

Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own. But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you.

[2 : 2 4] The Lord your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land. Your wives, your children, and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers.

You are to help your brothers until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them.

After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise. Then they answered Joshua, Whatever you have commanded us, we will do, and wherever you send us, we will go.

Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death.

Only be strong and courageous. Well, that's the word of God. Let's hear it preached. Joshua 1 is all about transitions and facing challenges, new beginnings, getting ready to face some fierce enemies.

[3 : 53] And all the while, Moses of the older generation has died, and Joshua is now taking his place. So just when they were facing their biggest challenge, the old guard has gone away.

They're on the edge of the promised land. It's promised to them. It's not theirs yet. They have to go and take it. So things were changing.

Things were changing in Israel's history and life. But God wasn't changing. His faithfulness wasn't changing. He changes not.

His compassions, they fail not. We sang that this morning. 10,000 years the same. Morning mercies new. Every morning.

So his word wasn't changing to them. His yes was still yes. His no was still no to them. Your word, Lord, stands firm.

[4 : 56] It's eternal. It stands firm in the heavens. And he had promised upon oath to his friend Abraham that his descendants would inherit this land.

God would give this land to his children, to Abraham's children. And so his promises weren't changing. The promises that Joshua and the people of Israel had already known, all of those were in the book.

They were as good as gold. And yet what we find here is that Joshua and Joshua, all of Israel, needed a new promise, a fresh promise to bring them, to take them into the promised land, to give them the strength to face what they were about to face.

So it was a new promise for Joshua. It's an old promise for us, but it was a new promise for Joshua for a new time. And you see it there in Joshua 1, verse 9.

Joshua 1, 9 is our text. Have I not commanded you? Be strong. Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged.

[6 : 04] For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. They were going to go to a new place, and the Lord was going to be with them. So here's a promise for changing times.

Here's a promise for difficult challenges. Here's a promise for us. For us. It addresses our greatest temptation and our greatest need in difficult times.

There's always this real temptation when you're facing challenges, when you're facing transition, to be afraid. To be afraid.

Afraid of the future. Afraid of what could happen. Afraid of what... Am I not going to have what it takes when that moment arrives?

Am I not going to have what it takes to get the job done? To take this new territory for King Jesus? Just as we've been singing. The church is a moving forward kind of people.

[7 : 10] Not a retreating people. Well, that takes courage and strength. But the temptation, though, always is to be afraid. Afraid that we'll fail.

Afraid that God will leave us to ourselves. That in the moment of difficulty, He won't come through for us. And so, in these times, in the times that Joshua is facing, the people of Israel are facing, that we face, there can be a hundred drums playing on our hearts.

There can be a dark storm inside of us. We can be very much like those disciples on the sea, saying, Lord, don't you care that we're going to die?

And what did... What was Jesus' response? Oh, you of little faith. You of little faith. Jesus could have said, I'm with you.

I'm with you. We sing that song, that He's the master of wind, and sea and sky. And so, when He speaks peace, be still, those waters have to be still.

[8 : 15] He was with them. But the temptation was to forget who exactly was in the boat with those disciples. So, the other temptation is to doubt, to give in to unbelief, to be those people of little faith.

And then what follows on that is discouragement. And the Lord says to Joshua, don't be discouraged. discouraged. Probably the quickest way to get to discourage someone, to make someone discouraged, is to make them afraid.

Because that fear can choke action. That fear can choke resolve. So, how often the very simple answer to why we didn't do what we wish we would have done is because I was afraid.

The Lord said to do this, but I was afraid. Well, discouragement. Facing those challenges and not being able to go through them or being afraid of them.

That's what was facing Joshua and Israel. And they did have understandable and real reasons to be tempted, anyways, to be afraid, to be discouraged.

[9 : 27] There were giants in the land. The 12 spies at least got that much correct. There were, the cities had strong walls.

That was true. There were nations stronger than them. Kings with weapons that Israel didn't have.

chariots and horses, the tanks of the ancient world. They were outnumbered. They were outgunned. They were outmanned.

And they were facing a wicked people on their own home turf and fighting for their lives. But God's word came down from heaven.

Don't be terrified. Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. Be strong. Be strong. Be strong.

[10 : 27] And that's the first lesson I want to give you tonight. In changing times and challenging times, God's command is to be strong and to be courageous.

Be strong and be courageous. What is the situation in front of you? We've talked about what the situation facing Joshua in Israel was.

What's the challenge, the hardship, the uncertain future in front of you? The Lord's answer is be strong and be courageous. Don't give in to fear.

Don't give in to despair. There's only a reason to give in to fear and to give in to despair if God is not with you. If God is not with you, then you have every right and every reason to be afraid, to be discouraged.

Then, the advice should be give up. You're on your own. It's you versus the future. It's you versus the world.

[11 : 29] And there's no wall that you can build high enough. There's no wisdom that you can devise that will be strong enough. If we are alone, then all we have at the end is fear and despair.

But Joshua wasn't alone. Israel wasn't alone and neither are we. And so, be strong.

Be courageous. Be strong. Do what needs done. That's what Joshua needed to hear. In these difficult times, you can muddle around and just sort of spin your wheels.

And Joshua needed to hear, no, be strong and do some things. Look at verse 6. It's not just stand around flexing your muscles. Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land.

That was the thing that God had particularly called him and Israel to do. That was the thing before them. To be strong and to do that thing.

[12 : 34] So, what is the thing before you? What is the act of obedience that is in front of you? Well, be courageous and do it.

Be strong and do it. Be strong and obey when obeying is not the easy thing to do. Be faithful when others aren't.

you see that in verse 7. Be strong and courageous. He says it again. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you.

Do not turn from it to the right or to the left. Sometimes it's very hard to do the right thing. It's hard to obey when times are uncertain.

Sometimes obeying does not in our human wisdom make sense. Obeying seems like to be something dangerous to do. Obeying seems to be something that can even be downright reckless.

[13 : 40] When there are enemies and things that make you afraid right in front of you. When the devil is dogging your steps and you have a reason to be discouraged. There you are discouraged. When friends and family are giving way, be strong and courageous and do the thing that God has called you to do.

Well, transition day is called for action. Not wilting, not lagging in doubt and despair, but obeying. God doesn't want any of his children whimpering in the corner, limp and terrified in days of trouble.

He wants us to face those head on. It's always up and at them. It's always up and at them. Just go in your mind to the book of Acts, the Acts of the Apostles.

How many times did we see challenges and persecutions and yet it was always this forward motion. It was always them doing the next thing.

So I think of Peter and John called in and they're threatened, the leaders threatened to punish the disciples. Jesus is gone.

[14 : 49] Now Peter and the Apostles are in charge, so that was a day of transition for them and there was every reasonable reason to be afraid.

They didn't have great political power. They didn't have connections. They were common men and these leaders say don't preach anymore in the name of Jesus.

Don't speak anymore about him. And where do you find those disciples next? You find them in a room praying, not Lord give us safety, but Lord give us boldness.

Give us boldness to keep on preaching. That was the thing in front of them. Give us boldness so that we can speak the word boldly.

How many times was Paul driven out of a city, stoned, confronted, maligned, abused, and he brushed himself off and he goes to the next town.

[15 : 54] He did the thing that was in front of him, the thing that God had called him to. And so I just want you to think about that thing that's in front of you. That future, that fear, that uncertainty in front of you and ask, what does God want me to do?

for Joshua it was obey and take the land. For you, for you, what is it? It's probably something very different for each one of us.

But this promise is for that exact situation that you are thinking about right now. This promise is for that exact situation that is filling your mind right now and the Lord's command in it is be strong.

Don't be discouraged. Be courageous and go do it. Now, we get the strength and the courage by faith. By faith.

Faith in the Lord is what moves us to do these very difficult things. I would just pause it. Go read Hebrews chapter 11. The mighty things that God's people do by faith.

[17 : 05] Joshua, by faith, did take the land. He faced those giants. He took those cities. He faced those nations and those chariots and those horses.

So, by faith in God's promise. And so, we go back to verse 9. Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged. And here's this key word, for, for, the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Verse 5, he says the same sort of thing. I will never leave you nor forsake you. verse 9 is just reiterating that promise in verse 5 of I will never leave you nor forsake you.

If you're having questions about can I apply this promise to my life when it was first given to Joshua, I would tell you to go read Hebrews chapter 13.

And the author of Hebrews takes it right out of Joshua 1, the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you. And he says, since God has said that to you, this promise is for us.

[18 : 09] So what is the promise? What is the promise that God first gave to Joshua but now he gives to each one of his people in difficult times? It's this, the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

It's faith in that promise that's going to give you strength to do that thing in front of you. To face down your fears, to face down your doubts, to face down your discouragement, and to actually be encouraged and move forward.

Because God is with you, you can do that thing that's in front of you. And so let's dig into this promise, let's dig in and meditate on it because it's only as we have a real appreciation for it, as we turn it around in our minds, that our faith is going to start to lay hold of it, that our faith grows, faith comes from hearing.

So we want to hear deeply this promise. And so here's the second lesson who is with us, the Lord your God.

The Lord your God is with you. Now, the Lord. Who was with Joshua? Well, it says the Lord your God. Now, what would have Joshua known and understood by that?

[19 : 21] Joshua's Bible is this thick, very thin compared to what we have. He knows some things. He knows the essentials. He knows the big important things, at least most of them.

But he knows who the Lord is. So when the Lord says the Lord your God is with you, what would have Joshua understood by that?

Well, he would have known, well, it was the Lord who said to nothing, to nothing, let there be light.

light, and out of nothing came light. He measured out the earth. He sunk the cornerstone in the waters. He shut the ocean behind stone doors, and he marked the edges, and he said to the tides, no more.

You go no further. He's the one that hung the sun in the sky. He's the one who spoke, and the moon, and the stars burst into being.

[20 : 24] that's who Joshua is thinking of. Genesis 1, the Lord is the creator. He was the creator of those giants, and all those people in that land.

He was the Lord who became friends with man. Genesis 3, we find the Lord taking sinful man's side against the serpent.

and he promised a savior for sinners. He was God who said to Abraham, he's my friend, and I'm going to show you where to go, and I will lead you.

And when everything is impossible, Abraham, when everything is impossible, I'm going to bring forth life.

I'm going to give you laughter. I'm going to give you Isaac. He's the God who walked through the animal pieces in Genesis 15 and said, if I don't give your descendants this land, then may I be like these animal pieces.

[21 : 32] May I be cut down and destroyed. God, as it were, puts his own life in the oath to say, I will do this.

And so by those two things, his promise and his oath, he assured Abraham that this land was going to be his peoples.

And Joshua is now thinking, the Lord is with me. The promise maker, the oath taker is with me. And he's the God who rescued Israel.

This is something that Joshua not had read about, but had actually lived through. When Israel cried out in their mourning and it came up before the Lord.

So who was the Lord? He was the one who struck Egypt with ten plagues and each one of them showing that he has complete authority over everything in creation, over land and sea and sky and animals, over darkness and disease and death.

[22 : 40] He has all authority. He is with Joshua. Joshua. He was the God when his people had their backs against the Red Sea, came down and Psalm 77 says, the waters writhed.

The Lord came down there, the crossing of the Red Sea. He was the God of manna and quail and water from rocks. He was the Lord who was holy, holy, holy, and yet through sacrifice was making a way for men to come to him.

He was the one who spoke to Moses and told him his name, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin, and yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.

That's who was with Joshua. That's who was with Joshua. Joshua. And that's who was with us. That's what Joshua would have known. But, like I said, we have more.

We have more. We have more reasons to even hope. We have this promise means more to us than it would have meant to Joshua because we know more about the one who is with us.

[24 : 07] So who is he? Let's just keep going with our little history. He's the God of Judges, the very next book, who's faithful to unfaithful people. He's the God who keeps his promises and raises up a king for his people, a king after his own heart.

He's the one who brought his people back from exile and so that they made it home. It was in another way, a second exodus. Who is he?

Well, he drew closer than ever. he was as close and as with as you possibly could be when he took on flesh in Jesus Christ.

He became Emmanuel, God, with us. God, one of us. God now forever joined to humanity.

remember a few months ago, that incarnation is forever. That was a permanent thing for the Son of God to become a man.

[25 : 19] And he was rejected. He was attacked. He was conspired against. He was maligned. He was crucified. And yet he was so with us that in that he was taking our sins upon himself.

This is the Lord who is with us wherever we go. The Lord Jesus even, pierced for our transgressions, pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, punished to bring us peace, wounded that we might be healed.

He's the one who is with us. We can say more. He's the Father who loves.

He's the life giver, this compassionate protector and keeper of his children. He is the Son, our mediator, our Savior, our prophet, our priest, our King, with us.

and who says to his disciples, I'll be with you to the very end of the age, and I'll come and take you to be with me where I am. He is spirit.

[26 : 35] John 16, 14, 15, 16, 17, our comforter, who loves us more than we can know. Romans 8 talks about when we don't know what to pray, he prays with groans, with moaning that are too deep for words, and the spirit intercedes for us, God now in us, God with us.

Well, that's who promises to be with you. That's who promised to be with Joshua. But we need to add these couple of words here.

You notice next he's our God, the Lord, your God. That was all just the Lord. And now we need to talk about your God. He, he's ours.

He is yours. He is mine. He belongs to me. So omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, mine, for me.

He's united himself to us. 1 John 1 3 says our, our fellowship, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. That word fellowship, it means partnership.

[27 : 55] It means mutual owning of each other, connected, interconnectedness. So it's comparable to a partnership in a business where the rising and the falling of the business is the rising and falling of both of the partners.

partners. And so these two people's business lives, they go up together and they go down together. That's what a partnership is. And God says, that's how it is with you and me.

I'm yours. So with you, as Father and Son, so this partnership, he's drawn up the documents.

He's filed the legal requirements in heaven. It's a blood-sealed contract that we will be His and He will be ours.

We're together. And so He's your God and He goes where you go. This is a partnerships business. It goes, their lives go together. So He goes where we go.

[29 : 05] He faces what you face. Your challenges are His challenges, we could say. In all of our affliction, He is afflicted. Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Do you think Jesus just said that as sort of a verbal repartee to help us to know that He and the church are connected? No, He's saying that persecution, I'm feeling it.

It's coming upon me. He's yours. He's mine. And that really just begs the question, how did He become mine?

How? Do you see the audacity of a human saying to God, you are mine? mine? But that's what it is.

That's what it says. I think those words just roll out of our mouths as if they're just something common. But He's yours. So how could it ever be that I could say He is mine?

[30 : 12] Well, I didn't buy Him. How do you get things? I didn't buy Him. I didn't earn Him. I didn't win Him. I didn't find Him. I didn't go up to heaven and bring Him down to me.

I'm a man. I'm nothing. So how can the dust of the earth say to the uncreated Creator, you're mine? Well, there's only one possible answer.

There's only one possible answer, and it's this, that He gave Himself to you. That's it. He, the only way you can say He's mine is if He gave Himself to us.

He's the Lord your God because He gave Himself to you. He didn't give you just His things. He gave you Himself. He came to you.

He came to you. This is conversion. He comes to you, and you're sinful, and your heart's closed, and your hands closed, you don't want Him, and He comes to you, and He opens up your heart like Lydia, He opens up your hands, and then He places Himself into your hands.

[31 : 21] He gave, He gives Himself to us. So however could a man say to God, He is mine, the answer is grace.

His grace to me, His goodness to me, His generosity to me. God's, and here's the wonderful thing, God's gifts can't be revoked, they can't be taken away.

What He has given, He won't take away, He's yours forever, and so Psalm 16 is right. You are my inheritance, you are my portion and my cup. Why?

Well, it's His grace. It's His grace. His own heart and love and generosity puts Himself at the disposal, so to speak, of people.

love and He says, from now on, you and I are together. And I love you. Now we could say a lot more about that, but it is that marriage, so to speak.

[32 : 32] You see a glimpse of it in the book of Hosea, where God and Israel are married. He had given Himself to her.

Well, it says that's who will be with you wherever you go, the Lord your God. So not only is He all of those things that we have already talked about, Creator and Lord and everything else, but He freely gives Himself to His people forever.

And so we could say He's my Jehovah Jireh, my provider. He's my Jehovah Rapha, my healer, my Jehovah Shammah, my God who's with me.

And that's why Jesus died. Not just so that we could get heaven, but so that we could get God. And that's why Jesus died, so that sinners could be washed clean, and they could be brought home, and they can be joined.

So He paid the prodigal's price to get back. He was forsaken that we could be forgiven. And Jesus died that God might really, truly, rightfully, wholeheartedly give Himself to us.

[34 : 00] and He could give Himself to us in all of His glory, all of His joy-producing glory, that for the countless ages to come, He will show the riches of His kindness to us.

And then the opposite side of that is that for the countless ages to come, we could treasure Him. We could treasure Him and say, look, this God is my God.

Look at what I am. Look at who He is. Jesus died to give you God in all of His glory. But what is the promise here?

Here's the third lesson and the last lesson. God will be with you wherever you go, with you wherever you go. where does He promise to be with us?

Wherever. That's absolutely expansive. Wherever you go, wherever life takes you, wherever His people end up, He says, I'll be there with you.

[35 : 15] There's that psalm about, I put the Lord at my right hand. This is saying God puts Himself at our right hand. He says, I'm here with you. I'll walk beside you. I'll be your shepherd. And so when we face enemy giants in that land across the Jordan, I'll be there.

And when you're standing in front of that giant wall in Jericho, I'll be there. And when you're facing overwhelming odds, when the deck is stacked against you, when there's no help to be found and you're outnumbered and you're outmanned, I'm going to be there.

Joshua 11, they came out, this is all these nations, these kings, they came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots, a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

All these king joined forces and made camp together at the waters of Marom to fight against Israel. So when you get to your waters of Marom and everybody is against you, all the horses and the chariots and the kings and the huge army, there they are at the waters of Marom, but God is there.

And the very next verse after that says, do not be afraid of them. Don't be afraid of them. Because by this time tomorrow, I will hand all of them over to Israel slain.

[36 : 31] How's that for a present? I will be with you when you face overwhelming odds. I will be with you when all human help is gone.

We already talked about at the Red Sea. Israel had no allies. Ukraine has all these people giving them money and weapons.

Israel had no one. Israel had no friends. They were alone in the world, but God was with them there in that desert, and he was enough for them.

And when we're afraid and when we're discouraged, when the future is all unknown, when darkness is your only friend, Psalm 88. Wherever you end up, and God can lead his people into some pretty dark places, but he never leads them and pushes them forward without going with them.

The Lord your God will be with you. Charles Spurgeon, poverty may stride in at my door, but God is in the house. Sickness may intrude, but I have medicine already.

[37 : 47] God has chosen me. In that silent chamber of yours, there sits by your side one you have not seen. He loves to come into these desolate places that he might visit you.

Your friend sticks close to you. Psalm 23, even in the valley of the shadow of death, I'll fear no evil. Fear not, for I am with you.

wherever you go. Does he call you into a furnace of affliction and suffering? King Nebuchadnezzar's furnace had four men in it.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. when you walk through the waters, I will be with you, with you with all of his power, with you with all of his goodness, with you with all of his wisdom, all of his grace, all of his love, with you with his word that cannot fail, cannot be broken, with you, Psalm 46 is an ever-present help in trouble.

So do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.

[39 : 12] I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. All that he is, with us, wherever we go. Now, then what is there for us to do?

Well, we already talked about being strong and courageous. That's actually what faith looks like. That's what faith eventuates. That's what faith does.

But here at the very beginning, what do we need to do? We need to remember this promise. We need to believe it. We need to hold on to it.

We need to believe this promise for yourself this week and in the weeks to come. You're going to need it and I'm going to need it. And so look to Christ and say, you know what? He sealed this promise for me.

He sealed this promise for me. This is one of those blood-bought things that belong to me. And so then you claim it. You claim it.

[40 : 14] How unfortunate it would be if you were to go to indianaunclaim.com and there's this wealth that's yours that you're not taking any advantage of. Well, you claim this promise.

You take it. You sign it. You cash it. You say, this is mine. This is for me. And so you don't go walking around limp and discouraged, not doing that thing that's in front of you. But with this promise in your back pocket, you unlock the door.

You unlock the door of despair. You unlock the door of discouragement. You unlock the door of fear. And you go out in the sunshine. Be strong and courageous for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that this promise is for us. And I would just pray that you would take it and seal it in our own hearts. Give us faith to believe it.

Give us faith to act upon it. Thank you that the Lord Jesus won it for us. And we did not earn it for ourselves. We did not win you or earn you, but it's all because of him.

[41 : 26] And so we want to do our Savior's sacrifice justice by believing what he has given to us and trusting ourselves to him and to what he's done for us.

Thank you for this promise. Use it to encourage us in the days and the weeks to come, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen.