

## The Only Way to Live

Second in Command: Life of Joshua – Part II

Joshua 1:7-8

### Introduction

I invite your attention back to the book of Joshua today, as we continue our study of this book while making our way through the Bible. In our last discussion, we observed Joshua as a man filled with incredible fear. He was terrorized by the project that God had laid before him.

As you may remember, God gave Joshua some very important lessons, especially concerning leadership. God basically said, “Joshua, Moses is dead, but I am not. Leaders may change, but I do not. People may vacillate; people may change, but in My purposes, I do not change; I am consistent.”

So God could encourage Joshua, in chapter 1, verse 5b, with the words,

*... Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.*

The word for fail, in Hebrew, could be rendered, “I will not relax toward you” or “I will not be weak toward you”. In other words, “Joshua, I am guaranteeing My sovereign power to help you accomplish what I am asking you to accomplish.”

Now let us divide this study today, into three sections.

### The Project

The first division we will call, “The Project”. It is summarized in the words from Joshua, chapter 1, verse 11,

*... go in to possess the land...*

Look at verse 2.

*Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.*

Skip to verses 10 and 11. Note the last phrase of verse 11.

*Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, “Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it.’”*

In November of 1947, fifty-six delegates to the United Nations met to determine the fate of this group of people who were wanting statehood. They were wanting to be recognized as a nation – the nation Israel. The delegates had gathered to vote on what would become the future of this state.

When the first delegate, the delegate from Guatemala, stood with his vote, he was interrupted. The interruption came from the voice of one in the gallery of spectators who cried out in Hebrew, “Adonai yasha va.”; that is, “Lord, save us.”

This cry goes all the way back to the Pentateuch, when the people of God were given the land and failed to take the land. God calls it “their possession”. It is their land, but they did not take it.

The land is still divided today. In fact, it was not until 1967 that Israel was able to expand her territory and control Jerusalem. Even today, the pressure is on for them to give back to the sons of Esau, the Arabs, land that they have conquered.

The problem goes a long way back to this book, called Joshua. For several reasons, they did not conquer the land. Apathy would be one reason, disobedience would be another, and unbelief would be the third. We will look at them in a moment.

Now I struggled in my study this past week, to include what we are going to do today, because it is the type of thing that takes a lot of digging. We like to dig in the God's Word, but there are truths that are hard, if not impossible, to truly grasp. However, I do not think I would do justice to the book of Joshua without taking you to its New Testament counterpart, the book of Hebrews, and point out a passage of scripture. So, turn to Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4, where we find the parallel between the Old Testament Israelite's possession of the promised land and the New Testament believer's possession of the victorious Christian life.

Before we look at this, I am going to shatter some of the good old gospel songs that we love. I am sorry, but Canaan is not a picture of heaven and Jordan is not a picture of death. One of my favorite hymns was, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand*. When I was younger, the church my family attended would give opportunities to choose hymn favorites. I would always ask for that one. It was not until I began to study God's Word that I discovered the song was wrong. Jordan is not death and Canaan is not heaven. If Canaan is heaven, Canaan has enemies in it; Canaan has temptation in it; Canaan has sin among God's people in it. I hope it is not heaven. Amen?

Now look with me at Hebrews, chapter 3, verse 1. Note that the writer is speaking to believers.

***Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling . . .***

Now, if you can understand this well – that he is talking to believers – it will help you to further understand the book of Hebrews. Skip to verses 7 and 8.

***Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness."***

Look at verses 10 and 11.

***Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart; and they did not know My ways"; as I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest."***

Turn to chapter 4, and look at verse 1. The writer makes the application. The first word "therefore" means that this is on the basis of the Israelite nation's rejection or disobedience and their failure to possess their possessions.

***Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.***

In this verse, "His rest" does not mean heaven. This is an interesting verse. He is implying a not only deep, but very fearful truth that is not very popular today. It is possible for the Israelite to not enjoy the promised land because of disobedience, apathy, and rebellion. In the same way, this New Testament writer says it is possible for the New Testament believer to, as it were, wander in the wilderness of defeat, or enter Canaan and live with intermittent defeats only, one after another.

Jesus Christ said, in John, chapter 10, verse 10b, . . . ***I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.***

Jesus came that we, as believers, might have life and not only life, but abundant life. Oh, there is a difference! We have life in Christ, but there are some who have life more abundantly. Who are they? They are the ones who are possessing their possessions.

God has basically said to every believer, "This is what I want you to enjoy."

Jesus Christ says, "The abundant life can be yours."

In the Bible, there are over two thousand promises to help us. We just need to claim them; we need to live them; we need to obey them. There are promises for every problem and every difficulty. There is deliverance promised from worry, anxiety, fear; strength promised for our weakness; comfort promised for our sorrow; grace promised for our suffering; wisdom promised for our relationships, our work, our lives. It is all in God's Word to us. There is no need for any of us to wander in the wilderness.

**The obstacles of the Israelites exist today**

However, the problem with the Israelites exists today. Let us take a look at the three problems.

### **Apathy**

1. Number one is apathy.

Now I have been informing you of the exciting record of the soccer games that I am going to every Saturday with our boys. I went to a game yesterday. So far, I have not missed even one. I told you, as well, in our last discussion, that no one is supposed to keep score at the five-year-old games. The way the last two games have gone, I am trying to forget the score! However, the bright spot yesterday, was that one of my boys scored a goal. It is no surprise to me, he gets all of his athletic prowess from . . . his mother.

It was great because we saw him – he is vying; he is pushing; he is running; he is kicking, and ultimately, he gets down the field and kicks the ball and it is a goal! He throws his little five-year-old fists into the air; he is excited – it is a goal! Of course, my wife and I are on the sidelines doing the same thing!

Now, the whole team could rejoice; we were all excited, but *nobody*, other than my son, could experience what only he was experiencing. Why? Because he was the one who went through it and pulled it out.

There is no married couple that cannot throw their fists into the air and say, “We’re experiencing victory!” But, it is only the couple that determines to fight for it; work for it; give it their time; make it their priority, that can shove their fists in the air and say, “By God’s grace, we are experiencing intermittent victories, rather than intermittent failures.”

Possessing possessions.

### **Unbelief**

2. There is another trouble and that is, unbelief.

This is when people say things like, “Something happened in my life and God didn’t seem to care.” or “The battle is too tough.” or “Growing up is painful.” or “It is easier to worry than to trust, so I’ll just nurse my anxiety.”

The individual who says those things is wandering in the wilderness.

We will use couple number one as an illustration. They have a child and the doctors make the sad discovery that this child has an incurable disease.

This couple, though believers, raise their fists toward God and say, “God, how in the world could You do this? How dare You!”

Couple number two go to the hospital where it is discovered that she, or maybe he, has a terminal illness. Then, you watch in amazement as they turn their faces toward God and say, “It is so difficult, but, by Your grace, I will believe You; I will trust You.”

Couple number two is possessing their possessions.

### **Disobedience**

3. There is the problem, as well, of disobedience.

This is not being in the position for God to bless. This is always being out there somewhere near the banks.

Victory in the personal life comes to the believer who is willing to fight. Why do you think we have been given the warring armor – offensive and defensive – for the believer who will strap it on and say, “I am ready for battle. Let me in.”? That individual is the one who says, “I will believe God and trust Him.” That individual is going to possess the land.

## **The Problem**

Now, there is a problem confronting Joshua. Do you remember that? We will call this division, “The Problem”.

### **Two obvious challenges**

We studied one problem in our last session, and that is, replacing someone like Moses. We will review that.

### **Joshua’s personal challenge**

Joshua is going to take the place of an individual who is the greatest leader that has lived. The Bible, in Deuteronomy, tells us that no one will ever be greater than Moses until the One greater than Moses will appear – that being Jesus Christ. How would you like to fill those shoes? Joshua is terrified. He is perhaps, clouded with the lack of courage. In fact, God has to say several times, “Don’t be afraid.”

You may remember that Hollywood, a number of years ago, produced a movie entitled, *The Ten Commandments*. Who did they choose to play

Moses? Charlton Heston, with his square jaw and tough, glaring eyes. He just looks at the water and it parts! Then there is his understudy, the part of Joshua, and who do they choose to take Charlton Heston's place? Well, what was Joshua like? Maybe he was like Mr. Rogers.

### **The Israelite's challenge**

There is a second, more serious problem, however. It affects all of the Israelites, and that is, the inhabitants of the land.

Who is living in Canaan? The Canaanites. That was a trick question! The Canaanites make up seven nations. They are warring nations; they are ready for battle. God says, "Joshua, go in and possess the land, but, by the way, they are not going to wave their white flags and say, 'Oh, here come the people of God, we'll give up.'"

Now, where do the Canaanites come from? And, by the way, why does God have the right to tell the people of Israel, "Go in and kill all those people.?" Have you ever asked that question?

Turn to Genesis, chapter 9, where we find the answer to that question. The last part of this chapter tells the story of a saint who sinned; that is, Noah, who got drunk. In his drunkenness, he was evidently, reveling in some kind of lewdness and had stripped off his clothing. We are told that his son Ham saw him, and it is implied that he derided him. There was probably the expression in his own heart that he was rejecting the God of Noah, but we are told very little. The other two sons, Shem and Japheth, walked backwards and covered their father's nakedness. When Noah came out of his stupor, he cursed Ham, but who did God curse through Noah? Look at verse 25.

#### ***Cursed be Canaan . . .***

It was not Ham who was cursed, but his son Canaan.

Many times in the Old Testament, God curses because He sees exactly what is going to happen. The Canaanites, who formed the seven nations coming from the loins of Canaan, would grow up and take over the promised land.

It is interesting that archaeologists have uncovered some helpful material that lets us in on the Canaanite rituals. These people were wicked – they had rejected God. They were involved in child sacrifice; they were

involved in bestiality and homosexuality; they were involved in religious prostitution, plus other such practices. They were a wicked people.

God had evidently, somehow placed among them a godly priest by the name of Melchizedek. We only have the implication that he was constantly, continually rejected – the people would not listen.

So, understand that when the people of Israel go into the promised land, they are not only claiming their inheritance, but they are also a tool of judgment in the hand of God who condemns sin. Deuteronomy, chapter 9, verse 4, tells us,

***Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, "Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land," but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is dispossessing them before you.***

### **The Promise**

Now, if you were Joshua and were told by God that you were supposed to fill Moses' shoes and that you were supposed to go into this land and take on seven nations, wouldn't you want to know what your resources were; wouldn't you want to know how God plans to help lead the people and allow them to conquer? He will give us the answer in the two verses we are going to look at now, and we will call it, "The Promise".

We will look at verses 7 and 8 of Joshua, chapter 1. We can summarize the promise with these words, "Joshua, you will have success; you will prosper."

This past week, I spent several hours studying these two Hebrew words, "sakal" and "tsalach," which are the words for, "success" and "prosper". After studying these, I am more convinced than ever that success as defined by the world, is world's apart from success as defined in the Word. While the world is clamoring for prosperity; for success today, God, in His Word, calls it something completely different.

One problem is that the evangelical church, at the height of its potential, is giving the world their same definition back – that success or prosperity is stuff; things; possessions. You can turn on the television and hear religious leaders, one after another, say the very same thing, "God will give you success, if you do such and such." That usually involves sending some

kind of seed gift to their organization – then God will really pour it on. Baloney!

Let me give a definition of success according to the Word. To prosper, in the Word, means, “to live with such a passion for knowing and pleasing God that to live any other way is unattractive, if not unthinkable.” Several verses bear this out.

Nehemiah prayed to God, in chapter 1, verse 11,  
... *make Your servant successful* . . .

Was he worried about the kind of home he was going to live in, in Jerusalem? No. He would get up in chapter 2, verse 20, and tell the people,

... *The God of heaven will give us success* .  
..

What is he talking about? “Sakal”; he is talking about God allowing them to obey Him and to know His Word and to live with such a passion that, in that obedience, they would find life worth living, and find any other kind of living unattractive, if not unthinkable.

### Joshua’s “treatment” of the Word

However, Joshua was given the resource – you know it in your Bible; you know these very familiar verses – the resource was the Word itself. God tells Joshua that he is to do three things to this Word.

### Obey it comprehensively

1. Number one, Joshua was to obey it comprehensively.

Look at verse 7, Joshua.

*Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success [“sakal”] wherever you go.*

It is interesting that God implies that sin is on both sides – the right and the left – and the way to succeed is to walk right down the middle. It is as if sin is not in some way off place, it is right here.

The Word is the resource.

John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, wrote in the flyleaf of his Bible, “Either this book will keep me from sin, or sin will keep me from this book.”

Now, what was the book of the Law? It was literally the book of the Law; the Torah; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; the first five books of the Old Testament. We took nearly a couple of years to study them. Joshua was to study so that he could obey the Torah. Evidently, it was at his disposal. He had probably seen Moses writing it and it was available to him so that he was to study it. Why? So that he would just learn what it says? No. So that he could obey it.

### Communicate it correctly

2. Secondly, Joshua was to communicate it correctly.

Look at the first part of verse 8.

*This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth . . .*

Now we know that literally, once every seven years, the leader of the people was to read the Law; the Torah; the Pentateuch; the first five books of the Old Testament in the hearing of the entire congregation. Imagine the people sitting or standing and having Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy read to them every seven years, so that they would know what it said.

Success would come when Joshua would thoroughly know it, obey it, and communicate it to the people.

Do you want your son or daughter, whether they are grown and gone, in the home, or in the cradle, to be a good citizen when they grow up? Absolutely. But an unbeliever can be a good citizen. Do you want them to have a good job? That would be nice. But an unbeliever can have a good job. Do you want them to be moral and upright? Yes. But as unbeliever does not even need God to be that. Do you want them to be successful? That is different. It will mean that you communicate the Word consistently; that God is on your lips; that the Word is in the home and not just reserved for Sunday.

Our church had a visitor from the *News and Observer* who came to take pictures earlier today. He is working on an article for tomorrow’s edition of the newspaper, on churches that meet in schools. For whatever reason, they chose to highlight our church and will include a couple of pictures. I asked him why. He said, “Well, a couple of people mentioned

that you're the biggest one in town meeting in a school."

I had hoped that it might have been for another reason or two.

I am literally barraged; inundated with information on how to be successful as a pastor and how to be successful as a church. If you think you get it in your business, you should see my study. Church growth principles abound – I get them in book form. I usually file most of them in that little round container by my two-drawer file cabinet.

Do you know what a successful church means? It means that its passion is to know, so that it can please God. How does that happen? By knowing the Bible and communicating it, consistently and correctly – whether in a Sunday school class or in the service – it becomes the hub. *That* is something no newspaper will ever publish, but that is what we would claim in being an effective church. Everything else is a spoke off of that hub.

### **Meditate on it consistently**

3. Number three, Joshua was to meditate on the Word consistently.

Look at verse 8b.

*. . . but you shall meditate on it day and night . . .*

The word "meditate" could be translated "mutter; ponder". In other words, God's Word is always on your lips; it is ruminating like a cow would chew its cud.

To read the Bible is to eat; to meditate on the Bible is to digest – to take time to think and to study. God not only requires obedience, He requires intelligent obedience. In fact, from this, we could surmise that God not only wants us to do what we know to do, but wants us to know what we are supposed to do. We can never claim ignorance when we have the Bible. He gives it to us as our responsibility to know how to obey. He tells Joshua,

*. . . meditate on it . . .*

Now we have Philippians; we have Colossians; we have Psalms and Proverbs. What did Joshua have? Leviticus! Yet, God considered that sufficient to help him to live successfully for Him.

The question we might ask is, "Is this book enough; is it really sufficient?"

In 1983, Josephine Taylor of Ontario, Canada, said she saw the image of Jesus Christ reflecting off her bathroom floor. A minister from that town came to her house to see it and was skeptical. He said, "No, it's just worn adhesive coming through the tile and it has formed some kind of image."

Three thousand Canadians came to look.

Thousands of people flocked to Arlene Garner's trailer in Tennessee, in 1987, because the image of God was reflecting off her deep freezer. She had also had a dream in which God had told her that He had turned her freezer into a TV screen and was going to use it to reflect His image to the world.

You might think, "You've got to be kidding!"

Thousands of people came, however.

In New Mexico, in 1977, in case you think the Tennessee story is bad, a woman claimed that the image of Jesus had appeared on a tortilla she had burned in a skillet. If you can believe it, so many people came to see the tortilla that she set up a shrine to Jesus of the tortilla.

There have been sightings of Jesus' image on billboards in Georgia and on the sides of tankers going cross country.

More than fifteen million people, many from America, have gone to a village in Yugoslavia, where Mary, apparently, is seen holding a baby. I read a *Life* magazine article that told of a woman from America, who was terminally ill and went to see the image. She went because, and I quote, "I needed to know that my suffering was not in vain and that my God had not abandoned me."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the bottom line – this world is so desirous of knowing that there is someone out there; that there is something else; that life is really worth it. The question is really, "Is the Bible sufficient to tell us who it is out there and who it is at work in our lives?"

The world craves tangible evidence, so it flocks to the shroud of Turin; it craves the story of a splinter from Noah's ark; it desires some experience or some vision; it wants to see some sighting. Yet, all along the way, we are casting the Bible aside, and saying, in effect, "This is not enough. I want something else."

Paul wrote to his son in the faith and said, in II Timothy, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17,

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for*

***correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God [the believer] may be adequate, equipped for every good work.***

The Bible is enough.

The promise of Joshua is again qualified with a command, in the last part of verse 8,

***. . . 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 success [“saka”].***

Alan Redpath was speaking to his congregation at Moody Church years ago, and I want to repeat the words to you. He writes,

*I have no magic formula for your holiness. I have no hocus pocus treatment to offer you. I have no shortcut to spiritual power for any of you. All I can do is say to you, “Go back to your Bible. Meditate day and night and go down before God on your face in prayer. For the greatest transactions of a Christian’s experience are made, not in church, but behind closed doors.”*

Success in private produces a passion for knowing and obeying in public.

The problem is not that we do not have enough revelation from God. The problem is not that He has not prepared us for battle. The problem is not that we do not have the resources. The problem is not that we do not have enough of Jesus Christ. The problem is that Jesus Christ does not have enough of us.

There on the swollen banks of the Jordan River, God spoke to Joshua, and said, “Joshua, you have everything that you need – the first five books of the Old Testament. If you will obey it; if you will study it; if you will mutter it, Joshua, you’re going to be successful. I’m not talking about things you’re going to own; where you’re going to work; what you’re going to live in; what you’re going to drive, I’m talking about the kind of life that has a passion for knowing, and serving, and pleasing Me, so that, Joshua, everything else in life is unattractive, if not unthinkable. But, Joshua, do I have all of you?”

## **Conclusion**

Let us repeat the words of a song sung by Steve Amerson. Just allow the words of this song to float

over your soul, quietly before the Lord, and ask yourself, “Can I say this to God?”

*Your will, not mine, Lord; Your will, not mine;*

*In what lies ahead, may I always be led,*

*By Your will, not mine.*

*Your will, not ours, Lord; Your will, not ours;*

*In what lies ahead, may we always be led,*

*By Your will, not ours.*

*The future is something we know little of;*

*And that is the way it should be;*

*So I’ll live for You, Lord, one day at a time,*

*You are quite enough future for me.*

*I’ll seek Your will, not mine, Lord; Your will, not mine;*

*In what lies ahead, may it always be said,*

*“I did Your will, Your will, Your will, not mine.”*

Turn to Joshua, chapter 23, and look at verse 6. Note Joshua’s farewell address as he speaks to his people, having lived a very successful life. He says,

***Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,***

Does that sound familiar? Skip to verse 14.

Joshua is saying this as he is about to die.

***Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.***

This is taken from the life of a man who lived one hundred ten years and lived successfully; that is, he had a desire to know and to please God and pursued that with such passion that to live life any other way was unattractive, in fact, it was unthinkable. How successful are we?

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/13/1991 by Stephen Davey.

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