

Moses' death and Joshua's commission

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[0 : 0 0] Will you turn with me now to the chapter that we read, particularly the chapter in Joshua, in chapter 1, verses 1 to 9. But I would like to look today at the death of Moses and then the commission that Joshua got to lead the children of Israel into the promised land.

And over the next few weeks, I would like to take a quick sweep through the book of Joshua. The book of Joshua is the sixth book in the Bible and it records for us a most interesting and important part of the history of the children of Israel.

It tells us of the capture of the promised land, the promised land of Canaan, and of the dividing up to each tribe their portion in it. It tells of the end of the wilderness journeys.

The time they had spent in the wilderness was 40 years and this is the time when they finish and the beginning of the new life in the land which had been promised to them.

The book of Joshua shows us the faithfulness of God in that he had promised to Abraham hundreds of years before. He had promised the children of Israel this land.

[1 : 0 5] And in the covenant that he made with Abraham, he had told them that Abraham's descendants would cover that whole land and would be given that land.

And that was at a time when Abraham didn't even have a family. But it shows us the faithfulness of God. But it also shows us what is required of those who would receive the fulfillment of the promises of God.

Because we see here what is required of the children of Israel. The land had been promised to them. It was the promised land. And yet severe difficulties had to be overcome. Enemies had to be driven out.

And there had to be a constant watch set against would-be invaders before the land could be enjoyed by them. The land, as I say, was a land promised by God himself.

It was a gift. A gift of his sovereign grace. And yet the children of Israel had to fight for every inch of it and had to fight to keep it. And is this not, in miniature, a story of the believer's life?

[2 : 0 8] Eternal life is the gift of God. But it's also a crown won by faithfulness. Upon committing your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved.

And yet it's only the beginning of your struggles. It's only the beginning of the fight because you have to fight to clear out the enemies that are in you. You have to fight to be watchful of the attacks from outside.

You cannot say, I can put my feet up now and relax because I'm a Christian. You cannot do that. Like the children of Israel in the promised land, you have to fight against enemies. And you have to accept the responsibilities that believing in the Lord Jesus Christ brings upon you.

And in this book of Joshua here, we get particular instruction about all this. That we find the struggles that go on in our lives when we become Christians.

And in our look at the life and times of Joshua, we pray that we will learn lessons as we go on in how to overcome those difficulties and those battles that we have to fight.

[3 : 13] Joshua, he was a man who was the son of a man called Nun. We're not much known about him. He was of the tribe of Ephraim. And we know that he was born in Egypt while the children of Israel were slaves down there.

So he himself, Joshua, would have experienced the harsh cruelty of the taskmasters of Egypt. But we know that he patiently bore that.

And we also know that he patiently bore the 40 years' wanderings in the wilderness. And we read snippets about him where we find out that he was very loyal and that he was brave in battle and that Moses had earmarked him to be a captain over his army.

We read that when he was fighting against the Amalekites. And then he was one of the spies that was sent in to spy out the promised land. And he came back with a good rapport. So that his self-discipline, that is, when he was waiting for Moses, remember, up on Mount Sinai and all the rest of the children of Israel became impatient and they began to worship the golden calf, Joshua waited patiently until Moses returned.

He was Moses' lieutenant. And all these snippets that we gather about Joshua, they tell us that he was a fit successor for Moses. But when the summons did come for him to take over the leadership of the children of Israel, we know that he himself would have been very surprised, but that others would not.

[4 : 38] Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord speak unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses, my servant, is dead.

The death of Moses. In Deuteronomy 34, 5 and 6, we read about the death of Moses. So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

And he buried him, that is, the Lord buried him, in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethsaida, Bethsaida, but no man knoweth of a sepulcher unto this day. We read there, in those verses, that Moses three times is referred to as the servant of the Lord.

What an honorable title. This was the man who had turned his back on all the riches of Egypt. He turned away from the riches of Egypt, choosing rather to be a servant of the Lord than to be great in the land of the Pharaohs.

He was the leader of the children of Israel. He could have been their king, but he was faithful to his God. A man who was a true servant of the Lord from the time the Lord spoke to him out of the burning bush, until he handed over his position to Joshua now.

[5 : 52] But even as a true and faithful servant of the Lord, we wonder at the way that the Lord treated him. He had to die, for it is the lot of all men to die.

And as Jesus Christ comes first, but what surprises us, and what leaves us with a niggling sort of disappointment, is that Moses died before entering Canaan.

He must have been very disappointed himself. Forty years leading his people to the promised land. Forty years leading them through the wilderness, and there within a day's journey, of the end of his journey, within a day's journey of the promised land, and he dies.

Forty years training in the palace of Pharaoh. Forty years training in the solitude of Midian, where he kept sheep. Forty years leading the Israelites from Egypt, and training them to be a nation, and leading them to the promised land.

Before the final step, he must die. Moses knew long before this, that he wouldn't get into the promised land. Because, we read about Numbers 20, at a place called Rephidim, the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron, because there was no water.

[7 : 07] And they complained, and they wanted to go back to Israel, to go back to Egypt. And Moses spoke to the Lord, and the Lord spoke to him, and told him, to speak to a rock, to the rock at Rephidim, and water would come out of that rock.

But Moses seems to have been a wee bit involved, with the people, and he became angry with them. And he says, hear now you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? See the two mistakes.

Must we, himself and Aaron, when God had already told him, that he would bring the water out of the rock, take him to himself. And then we read, that he struck the rock twice, with his rod.

In other words, twice, he had gone beyond, what God had told him to do. And because of that, God told him, he would not bring this congregation, into the land, which I have given them.

The sentence of exclusion was passed. And Moses, within sight of the promised land, was one day told, to go up to the top of Pisgah, on Mount Nabal, and there he died.

[8 : 13] But by the kindness of God, we see there, that he was given sight, to the promised land. He was given a tremendous view, of the whole land, that was to be the peoples.

From this vantage point, on Pisgah, he was shown, all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain, of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zohar.

And as Moses, was gazing across, that magnificent, panoramic view, an earthly, scene of magnificence, it would slowly, fade away, to be replaced, by a vision, far more grand, far more magnificent.

He would see, the new Jerusalem, and he would see, Lord Jesus Christ, waiting, to welcome him home. As a mother, takes her babe, and kisses it, and lays it down to sleep, so the Lord, took Moses his soul, and laid his body down, we know not where.

Was there ever, such a burial, as that? By Nebo's lonely mountain, on this side, Jordan's wave, in a vale, in the land of Moab, there lies, a lonely grave, and no man knows, that sepulcher, and no man saw it ever, for the angels of God, upturned the soil, and laid the dead man there.

[9 : 47] O lonely grave, in Moab's land, O dark Bethpair's hill, speak to those curious, hearts of ours, and teach them, to be still. God hath, as mysteries of grace, ways that we cannot tell, he hides them deep, like the hidden sleep, of him he loved, so well.

The death of Moses, although in our first reading of it, we are disappointed, and it leaves us, with some regret. When we study it closely, there is nothing, to regret there.

The failure, to pass over Jordan, is as nothing, when compared, to the honour, which surrounded, his departing, this life. The death of Moses, was the climax, of his life.

And is this not so, with the Lord's people? Is this not so, with those who die, in Christ? Soon, our turn, will come. And when we are going, we will see, the glorious provisions, of the promises of Jesus, outspread before us, just like Canaan, was spread out, at the feet of Moses.

And then, we will be assured, into the presence, of Jesus, to be with him, forever and ever, in peace, perfect peace.

[11 : 08] There shall we see his face, and never, never sin, but from the rivers, of his grace, drink endless pleasures, in. The promised land, in which there is, no more trouble, no more tears, no more fighting.

The promised land, with the Lord Jesus Christ. But, when Moses was removed, his successor, was already prepared. The successor, was moved, of Joshua, the successor, Joshua, was already, ready to take his place.

The people, weren't left, to be scattered at all. The people, were not allowed, to scatter, without a leader. The laborers, are removed, but the Lord's work, goes on. We're not sure, how Joshua felt, when his earthly leader, was removed.

We know, that he was a patient man, and he had waited, before, forty days, and forty nights, for Moses, on Mount Sinai. But this time, there was to be, no return, for Moses. God himself, told him so, and at the same time, gave him, a divine commission.

Moses, my servant is dead, lead my people, into the promised land. Now Joshua, knew the tremendous task, that lay ahead of him, to get the people, across Jordan, across the river Jordan, which was in spit, at the time, would be no mean task.

[12 : 21] But he knew, that when he reached, the promised land, when he reached, the other side, there was a warlike, people already, in possession. They already possessed, Canaan, and the land round about. They would fight, for every inch, of the land.

And they were experienced, in fighting. The Hittites, and all these, they were experienced fighters. They had been fighting, for hundreds of years. And they were up, against a novice nation. A nation, that had been slaves, for over hundreds of years, 400 years.

And had been, in the desert, for 40 years. They were unprepared, for battle. They weren't a fighting machine, at all, like the others. The enormity, of the task, surely shook Joshua.

But the one, who called him, to do the work, would not leave him, without help. When the Lord, says arise, and go over this Jordan, then we know, that there is no such thing, as impossibility.

When God commands, there is no obstacle, that can stand, in his way. If it's in his plan, that we should march, through a swollen, rushing river, or attack, an impregnable, walled city, like Jericho, or turn, to fight an army, we know, that we simply, have to go forward.

[13 : 31] And we will find, the same as Joshua did, that he will make, the mountains away. He, the river, shall stop, and wait, for the passing. City walls, will fall down, and armies, will be scattered, as snow.

Look at the great commission, that Joshua got. Now therefore, the land, which I do give to them, now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all these people, and to the land, which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

And see how, with the command, goes the enabling, the token of the Lord's presence, the host of heaven, arrayed on his side, there shall not any man, be able to stand before thee, all the days of thy life, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. The promise there, was made to Joshua, as the leader of the nation. But what God required of Joshua, he required of the nation, what he promised Joshua, he promised the nation, he promised each individual person.

Joshua was merely, the channel, through which God was promising. This help. And he said, that as he had been with Moses, Moses had confronted Pharaoh.

[14 : 41] Moses had gone down, to face the mighty monarch, on earth at that time. And he had faced him. He had faced him, and the magicians, and the astrologers, the astronomers, and the wise men, and everybody else, that Pharaoh could produce.

And not one of them, was able to stand against him. Well in the same way, powerful nations, were facing Joshua. The giants that were there, of the anarchy.

But Joshua, knew that none, would be able to stand against him, because the Lord, God Almighty, Jehovah said, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

I will not fail thee, or forsake thee. What about you, my friend? Are you sad? Are you lonely? Are you beset, and all sides, by difficulties, and obstacles, then clasp this promise, to your bosom?

I will not fail thee, or forsake thee. But you may ask, have I right, to do that? Have I right, to do that? A promise, that was promised, to Joshua, thousands of years ago.

[15 : 44] How can we claim it, for our own? Well, read the New Testament, Hebrews 13, verses 5 and 6, where that very text, is quoted. He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear, what man shall do unto me.

The Holy Spirit records that, specifically, and particularly, for every believer in here. All the promises, that are made to individuals, throughout the Bible, they are available, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to every single believer.

The Holy Spirit records it, for Christians today. God is unchanging, and as he would not fail, or forsake Joshua, neither will he fail, or forsake, any of us.

The lonely, trembling soul, is able to face, the unknown beyond. He is able to go, and face the absolute unknown, unafraid. Yes, even able to go, singing, into the valley, of the shadow of death, for thou art with me, and thy rod and staff, me comfort still.

The protection, the power that is available, through the risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. God himself, with us. I will never leave thee, or forsake thee.

[17 : 03] But we're not that these promises, these divine assurance, of God's presence, and his help, were not given to Joshua, just so that he would be able, to relax, and sit back.

They weren't given to him, as a couch, so that he could put his feet up, and rest. No, they were given him, to do something. They were given him, in order to activate him, to give up his loins, for activity.

He was to obey, the commission given. He was not to say, within himself, God has promised me this land, God has promised this land, to the children of Israel, and we will most certainly get it, because nobody can stand, against the Lord, so I didn't do anything.

No, no, that wasn't Joshua's, part of play at all. The assurances, and the promises of God, were given as a spur, so that he would perform, the duty that was laid upon him.

As Paul says, to the Corinthians, in 1558, always give yourselves, fully to the work of the Lord, because you know, that your labor in the Lord, is not in vain. You see, God gives us the promises, but he accepts, he expects us, to accept the responsibilities, for them.

[18 : 09] It's not to put our feet up, and to say, that's all right, then God's in charge of that. He uses us, and he works through us, and he wants us, to be his servants, and when we try, when we're available, for the Lord, then he will never leave us, nor forsake us.

But if our response, to God's promises, is laziness, or carelessness, is that not a proof, that we have only received, the promises, that we're only accepting them, superficially, that we're accepting them, carnally, that we're not accepting them, spiritually, that we're not lifting your eyes, to see the supernatural power, that is available to us.

The use, or misuse we make, of the promises of God, is a good index, to the state of our hearts. Joshua, had the promises of God, he was told to be strong, and be of good courage, and by laying hold, of God's words, by faith, he would go forward, he would go across, the Jordan, he would take the children, of Israel with him, he would face the giants, of Canaan, he would overthrow, the mighty strongholds, he would overcome, the problems, that he would face, in the way, the problem of feeding, the tremendous number, of people that he had, because once he crossed, the river Jordan, the manna was going to stop, and he would have, to feed off the land, and he would have, to lead, this host, that he was responsible for, against other nations, he would have, to weld, this unpromising host, of Israel, and they really, were a pathetic bunch, of you read their history, a complaining, murmuring, stiff-necked people, ever ready, to return back, to Egypt, he would have, to weld them, into a robust, fighting nation, to drive out the enemy, and take possession, of the promised land, in the same way, my friends, our weakness, and fear, is often, because we don't, mix faith, with the promises, of God, we know the promises, but we push them, away from ourselves, we don't accept them, as our own, and we don't go forward, boldly, in the knowledge, that God has said,

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that every single thing, that happens, to any one of us, is under the control, of God, and even so, Lord, as seemeth good to thee, so we go forward, joyfully, when we mix faith, with the promises, of God, but notice as well, that in the commission, Joshua was commanded, to continue in the path, of obedience, to God's word, he was told, to continue in the obedience, only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayest have served, to do according, to all the law, which Moses my servant, commanded thee, coupled with the promises, coupled with the encouragement, is the direction, he's told what to do, turn, not from it, to the right hand, or to the left, that thou mayest prosper, whithersoever thou goest, Joshua was the commander, in chief, of the whole, of the children of Israel, but he wasn't left, to do his own thing, at all, he wasn't left, to his own fallible judgment, or to his fickle fancy, he was due, to do, according to all, that was written, in the book of the law, the book of the law, at that time, and this, this first time, that we have this book, mentioned, would have been composed, of five books,

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, written by Moses, and but they already, had it in a book form, because the God himself, says, so it is, with the believer, my friend, we are also, given, all the promises, we are given, the promises, of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are under grace, Jesus has done all things, we are under grace, not under the law, yet, there is a gospel rule, which we are bound to follow, whenever you come, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, what you hear, in your ears, straight away, is, whatsoever, he saith unto you, do it, we don't do our own thing, we don't make up, our own minds about things, we seek, and we say, what does the Lord Jesus say, about those things, the path of obedience, is the path of blessing, and it is amazing, that there in lies, prosperity, kiss prosperity, in any way you like, in any direction you like, and if you don't go, on the path of obedience, you will find none of it, you will never find it, not in this life, nor in the life to come, will you be prosperous, will you find prosperity, but it is promised to us here, that if we obey, what is in the law, and we follow the direction, that the Lord Jesus Christ, sets us in, then, we will prosper, this book of the law, shall not depart, out of the mouth, but thou shalt meditate, therein day and night, that thou mayest observe, to do according, to all that is written therein, for then, notice, only then, thou shalt make, thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt, have good success, have not I command thee, be strong, and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God, is with thee, whithersoever thou goest, the directions given, to Joshua, for conquering, the promised land, for conquering Canaan, and enjoying it, are the instructions, that we must follow, in the good fight of faith, the promised land, is promised to us, but we have to fight, whilst we are in this world, battles to be fought, the flesh, our own desires, our own lusts, our own weaknesses, our own frailty, fight against us every day, the devil is going about, like a roaring lion, trying to swallow us up, trying to lead us to stay, the world, with all its temptations, and its lure, is trying to lure us, off the path, the enemies, all around us, trying to make us, give way, and yet, victory is certain, for us, even when we are, surrounded by so much, enmity, for the Lord thy God, is with thee, whithersoever thou goest, we are more than conquerors, through the Lord Jesus Christ, the power that is available, to the Christian, through the risen saviour, he conquered death, he conquered the grave, the world, is his footstool, the Lord Jesus Christ, stands beside his people, and he says, to each one of us today,

[24 : 23] I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, should it not make us go, facing the future, with joyful hearts, not only with joyful hearts, but trying to obey him, trying to show others, the loveliness of Christ, and the power, and the strength, that is available, to each one, who puts his hand, in the hand of Jesus of Nazareth, and follows him, Amen, let us pray, O Lord, we praise thee, for thy great encouragement, for the way, that we read in thine own book, about, the strength, and the power, and the help, and the direction, and everything that is required, how it is available, to the Christian, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we give thee thanks, for the way, that we are able to read, about thine own loving concern, for thy servant Moses, the way that thou didst, show him the promised land, and the way, that that sight, melted, into a sight, of the new Jerusalem, and the way, that thou didst, take his body, and gently lay to rest, no man knows where, but thou knowest, and one day, he will rise, and he will appear again, and we pray, and ask, that each one of us, will be able to learn, from those lessons, and the directions, that thou didst give Joshua, and that we will be able, to go forward boldly, as true soldiers, of the Lord Jesus Christ, conquering yourselves, and reaching out, to conquer the world, in the name of our Saviour, we ask all these things, in Jesus' own name,

Amen.