

Be Strong And Courageous

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[0 : 00] As we turn to look at God's Word, we will be taking our text in Joshua. But just as we consider the commissioning of Joshua, I just want to very quickly, or try! to do it quickly, look at who Joshua actually was. Why was Joshua the man that was chosen to succeed Moses in leading the children of Israel after the death of Moses?

Well, the first thing that we know about Joshua is we know his name. But as we know him as Joshua, that wasn't the name that he was actually given when he was born. Numbers 13.8 tells us that Joshua was the son of Nun, but he was actually named Oshia by his parents. And it wasn't until he came to work for Moses that Moses actually renamed him as Joshua. What's in a name, we maybe say? Well, when his parents, when Joshua was born to his parents, they were in slavery, in bondage, in Egypt. And they gave him the name Oshia, which means salvation, something that they hoped for during their time in Egypt. But then when he came to work for Noah, sorry, when he came to work for Moses, he was renamed Joshua, which means the Lord is salvation. And when we think about what he then went on to do in terms of leading the people of Israel, we can see why his name was changed. That it wasn't to look at Oshia for salvation, but was recognizing that while Joshua led them, it was indeed the Lord that was their salvation when they came into the promised land. The first time we actually see Joshua mentioned, as we see there in Exodus 17, is that he was a soldier. He was chosen by Moses to lead a group of men against Amalek when Amalek rose up to fight against the children of Israel. And we see that Moses in that passage in Exodus, appointed Joshua, appointed Joshua, and Joshua went out to fight at that time. And he was successful in the battle. But that's also the occasion where Moses was told that he had to keep the staff of the Lord high and lifted up, and Aaron and Hur had to hold his arms up. And we see in that passage in Exodus at verse 14, the words, write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua.

[3 : 08] Moses had to record what had happened on that occasion, and he was to recite it to Joshua on a regular basis. Was it to encourage Joshua? Was it to point Joshua to the fact that God had been the one that had led them in battle, and that they had been able to overcome? We also see in Exodus 24, and at verse 13, and then in Numbers 11, 28, that Joshua was appointed as Moses' assistant. And this was a task that he took on from his youth.

What we become aware of is later on that how old Joshua had been, we can't actually determine that directly, but we would know that he was over 20, because he was part of the census that was taken when the people came out of Israel.

We next see that Joshua was a man that was faithful to God. Exodus 33 tells us, Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. He was faithful in his attendance at the tent of meeting. And even when Moses went away, Joshua stayed to meet with God. He recognized the importance of spending time with his Lord. Although he was Moses' assistant, he wasn't kept from carrying out special duties, or protected in any way. He was sent out as a spy. We can read that in Numbers 13. He was sent out as a spy to spy to spy the land of Canaan, along with 11 other men from the tribe of, from the different tribes. And he went out. And again, as we read in Numbers 14, he was a faithful witness for God. Despite the fact that the other 10 spies that went out came back and created this unity within the camp, Joshua and Caleb, Joshua and Caleb, that had been sent out, were faithful to their witness of God. And we can read that in Numbers 14, 6 to 10.

So much so, that when the men came back with a false report, Joshua and Caleb were prepared to stand up and defend what God had done.

[5 : 53] And they tore their clothes and encouraged the people not to rebel against God. How like Joshua are we prepared to be in our walk with God?

That when people come against us, are we prepared to stand up and continue our witness despite the opposition that may come?

And we see in this very reading that the rebellion of the people was so much so that they were prepared to stone our attempt to stone Joshua and Caleb along with Moses and Aaron and choose a new leader.

Now what we then see in this chapter in relation to Joshua is that he was set apart with Caleb to enter the promised land. I said earlier on that they were part of a census that was taken and because of the rebellion of the people at that time, God's wrath was such that he declared that nobody over 20 that was in that census would enter the promised land apart from two men Joshua and Caleb.

But then as we read earlier on we see another setting apart of Joshua. This man that had been faithful in his witness faithful to God was set apart now to lead the children of Israel.

[7 : 28] And this is where we come to our text in Joshua chapter 1 and at verse 6 where it says be strong and courageous for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

And our heading or our title for our sermon this evening is be strong and courageous. And what we see within this passage is we see a command we see conduct and we see a commission. and we will look at each of these points individually. First of all the command the command that is given it's a command it's a threefold command it's given three times we can see it in verse 6 we can see it in verse 7 and we can see it in verse 9 be strong and courageous only be strong and courageous and then in verse 9 have I not commanded you be strong and courageous on its own verse 6 might have just been an instruction to be strong and be courageous verse 7 could have been a further encouragement to only be strong and courageous but as we see in verse 9 it's made clear that it's not an instruction it's not an encouragement it's a command to be strong and be courageous Joshua was here standing before the people once again the previous generation had tried to stone him but here was Joshua standing do you think that he needed encouragement do you think he needed instruction do you think he needed to be commanded well the answer is yes he was standing before a people whose parents in the past had wanted to stone him he was now standing having been the servant of Moses or the assistant to Moses

Moses who had come into Egypt and led the people out after his discourses back and forth with Pharaoh Moses who had taken the people across the Red Sea in safety who had then lifted his hand and the waters had closed over the armies of Egypt Moses who had come down off the mountain and spoke after having spoken with God whose face shone Moses who had spoken to God when they needed food and God provided the food for them Moses who again spoke to God when they needed water and water was provided Joshua had seen all these things and now he stood before the people and God says to him be strong and courageous commanding him to be strong and to be courageous we stand each one of us at the threshold of a new year a whole year behind us that we can think

I wish I'd done this I wish I'd done that we can't change any of it but we're standing now at the beginning of a new year we may have our own plans we may have see opportunities that are there for us but do we first of all ask what's God's will for my life we may have worries our finances our health worries over our family worries as to what the future may hold but are we putting our trust in God not in ourselves not in our own finances nor in our own understanding it would be very easy for me to say be strong and courageous and then bring things to an end and think that that's how we're going to face life just being strong and being courageous but that's not what the passage tells us it tells us that there had to be conduct there had to be conduct that was going to cause the people to enter the land and that conduct is directed towards Joshua and as it was directed towards

[11 : 54] Joshua then it's also directed towards us this evening Joshua 1 7 and 8 what's the conduct that was required wasn't just to be strong and to be courageous it was to be careful to do according to all that Moses my servant had commanded you do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left that you may have good success wherever you go this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it for then will you make your ways prosperous then will you have good success how was Joshua to conduct himself he was to conduct himself through God's word

God's word was to be first and foremost in his life it wasn't to be a bible sitting on the shelf he only had the first five books of the bible according to what Moses had written and that was to be his guide he was to deliver the people into the promised land and his guide was to be that he lived his life according to God's word he wasn't to turn from it he was to meditate on it he was to speak about it it was to be on his lips how do we treat

God's word in our own lives do we see the bible there and think I'll give it time later on or do we actually recognise that as many would have learnt in Sunday school or even by the fireside at home what the charter catechism tells us in question two what rule has God given to direct us on how we may glorify and enjoy him the word of God that is contained in the scriptures of the old and the new testament is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify and enjoy him and question three goes on what do the scriptures principally teach the scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man do we treat God's word in that way when we pick it up to read it recognising that each and every time that we read it it's directing us on how we may glorify and enjoy

God forever are we reading it and understanding that what we read there is teaching us what God wants us to do and that God will be with us as we read it the word of God was to be Joshua's guide in life and how he read and interpreted God's word how he lived by God's word was key to the success that he would have the book of the law shall not depart from your mouth you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it Montgomery Boyce commentating on this says like ourselves Joshua was to live by obedience to the written word of God and not in hope of special revelations even more that written word is what ties us to Joshua just as it was what tied him to his illustrious predecessor

Moses indeed the Bible is what ties us to God for God has decreed that it is only through his word that he will be made known do you have a desire to know God better to understand how God is directing your life are you using God's word as Joshua was directed to use God's word and live by God's word the book of the law shall not depart from your mouth how often are you speaking on a daily basis about the word of God how often do you meditate on the word of God it might not be something you've ever done before I would encourage you read a passage get a pen and a bit of paper write down what you're seeing before you talk about it learn from

God's word because what it says there is so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it God might be saying to you tonight come come to me all ye that are weak and heavy laden God might be telling you to go as you read his word God are you adhering to what you're reading when you read God's word or is it just I've done my reading I move on are we actually meditating on God's word Joshua was standing before the whole congregation he was standing before God God knew the task that was before him he'd already commanded him to be strong and to be courageous and he gave him clear instruction on where his strength and his courage was to be found and it was to be found reading and meditating on the word of

[17 : 53] God why was it that he had been commanded to be strong and to be courageous why was he given clear guidance as to what his conduct was to be before the children of Israel it was because of the commission that he had been given the commission that he had been given we read again in Joshua 1 and verse 6 for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them and then again in Joshua 1 verse 9 for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go without thinking too much about the second one just now we'll focus on the first commission that is given for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them what was that promise!

Moses was commissioned before Joshua he was reminded as we see here in Exodus 3 and 68 when the Lord said I am God of your father the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God and then we read of the promise that had been given then the Lord said I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters and their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land to a land a land flowing with milk and honey to the place of the Canaanites the Hittites the Amorites the Perizzites the Hivites and the Jebusites the promise that had been given to Abram back in Genesis that he would be led into a land repeated to Isaac and then to

Jacob that they would inherit a land a land that was flowing with milk and honey and here was Joshua being commissioned to fulfill this commission we understand that it was a threefold

command to be strong and to be courageous to finish and take the people into the land that had been promised to them but God wasn't leaving Joshua on his own with this and if you allow me to have a bit of a play on words this commission was a commission Joshua wasn't going to be on his own and the promise that was given to Joshua is the same for each and every one of us and I apologize for the spelling mistake in the text it should read for the

Lord your God is with you wherever you go it is a commission for each and every one of us if we put our trust in God God has promised that he will never leave us that he will never forsake us Joshua was standing on the threshold of leading the children of Israel into the promised land he was commanded to be strong and to be courageous he was told that he had to read God's word to meditate upon God's word but ultimately that's not where his strength and his courage was going to come from his courage was going to come from the God that had promised and the God that still promises to each and every one of us that if we put our trust in him that he will never leave us that he will never forsake us we see we see that as we go on and we read in Matthew 28 the commission that's given to all Christians go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the

Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age we're not on our but it's a commission if we put our trust in God Acts 1 and verse 8 when Jesus was taken back up into heaven he had promised that the Holy Spirit the Comforter would come and we see there but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses In Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth the Holy Spirit is with us encouraging us and being with us my question to you tonight is are you being a living witness are you being strong and courageous in your witness for

[23 : 01] Christ you may be saying well I'm not going anywhere what did we read in Acts 1 verse 8 you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem this is your Jerusalem this is your home as it was for those first Christians in Jerusalem then are you being a living witness in your home within your community here at each and every opportunity some of you may go out to work in Stornoway that would be your Judea are you a living witness for God in your place of work you may go to Samaria to the mainland again when you're not within your own circles are you still being a living witness are you still being strong and courageous is the word of

God still central in your life and you may be called to go to the ends of the earth as a witness for God you may not have given your life to Christ you may be thinking what does this mean for me you've heard God's word time and time again but you haven't got the strength or the faith to be able to make that stand my encouragement is to you to be strong and to be courageous read God's word meditate on God's word and put your trust in God if you're hearing him knocking on your heart's door tonight don't leave the door closed have the strength have the courage to open the door and let him in let him into your life because he has promised that he will never leave you he will never forsake you the command might be to come the command might be to go but the command for each and every one of us is to be strong and to be courageous not for our own honor not for our own glory but to fulfill

God's commission to each and every one of us recognizing that it is a commission that he is with us every step of the way if we put our trust in him I appreciate we're finishing a bit early this evening the weather outside isn't that great but we put our trust each and every one of us in God tonight and if you haven't already done so my prayer and my continual prayer for you is that you will take that step that you will open your heart store and that you will let him in and that you may indeed know his presence his upholding hand and his guidance upon your life let us pray