

God's Superhero – Joshua

A Confident Commander

Judges 1:8

Introduction

Joshua follows Moses as the leader of Israel. He was one of the finest military leaders in Jewish history and arguably one of the greatest commanders of all time. He had been the top aide and advisor to Moses for many years. Now he was assuming command of a young yet powerful nation. His assignment would be to lead the children of Israel into the land of Canaan which God had promised to them while they were still back in Egypt.

In Joshua Chapter 1 we have the biblical account: (Read Joshua 1:1-9)

Joshua, the son of Nun, was from the tribe of Ephraim. His birth name was Oshea meaning "salvation" but Moses changed it to Joshua meaning "Jehovah saves." Deuteronomy records that just before the death of Moses, God spoke to Joshua and said, "Be strong and of a good courage, for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them, and I will be with you." (Deut. 31:23)

In Chapter one of the Book of Joshua, God tells Joshua six times to be strong and of a good courage. When you hear something like that said six times from God you probably need to brace yourself. Today we are living in uncertain times ourselves. Now more than ever, we need courageous men and women of faith. There are many people right now who are living in fear or discouragement. Some people are facing some very hard times and going through some difficult transitions in their lives. Maybe that's you! Maybe your life is going through a major transition right now! Maybe you're changing jobs or dealing with a promotion. Maybe you just found out you're having a baby or you're getting married. Maybe you've just lost a loved one or just found out you have cancer or a heart problem. How many of you know there are lots of reasons for us to be discouraged or feel fearful. In our lesson today, Joshua gives us some insight into how we can conquer our fears and experience God's victory and blessing. Taking command of your situation requires a great courage.

I. A Great Courage

Think about some of the people who demonstrate great courage.

Winston Churchill – stood up to Nazi Germany.

Abraham Lincoln – Emancipation Proclamation

Martin Luther King – Civil Rights leader

Mother Theresa – Champion of the poor of India

Brave American Soldiers who have fought for our liberties.

Courage is what causes us to face danger and fear with confidence and resolve.

Israel had been camping on the east side of the Jordan River just opposite the city of Jericho. They had been camping there ever since the people refused to go in possess the land while Moses was still leading them. Now, under the leadership of Joshua, God tells Israel to prepare to attack this fortified city. So Joshua sends two spies (instead of 12) from the camp to get information about the city entrances and about the nature of its fortification and the morale of the people.

When the spies returned to Joshua, they gave this report: "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us." Joshua is encouraged by the report and breaks camp and marches toward the city of Jericho. It was during the harvest season when the melting snow from Lebanon was already flooding the plains of the river Jordan. As the priests marched in front with the Ark of the Covenant, the people followed about a quarter of a mile behind. When they reached the bank of the Jordan, they spent three days sanctifying themselves before the Lord.

Can you imagine the excitement and nervousness them must have felt. Excitement to think that God once again was visiting his people once again with progress and vision. Excitement about the courage their new faith and confidence in God was inspiring within their hearts. Nervousness about the challenges and changes that lay ahead. Joshua shows us how God inspires great courage within us in order for us to face great challenges.

II. A Great Challenge

Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ¹¹ "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.' "

On the third day, the priests marched to the brink of the river and when the soles of their feet touched the water the river was rolled back. The faith that had faltered 40 years before was now being tested even more severely. But the children of Israel took courage and marched ahead and God rolled back the waters and they crossed over on dry ground. By the way, here's an interesting note to our lesson: At the Red Sea God honored Moses when the Egyptians were pursuing after Israel – but at the Jordan River God parts the waters with their enemies confronting them. And another interesting note: Once the children of Israel were inside the 'promised land' there was no more 'mana from Heaven' and they began to live off the land.

At Gilgal the people sanctified themselves before the Lord and God told Joshua, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." How many of you know it's a great day when mature to the place where you no longer are in constant fear of whether you are going to return to Egypt and sin. It's a great day when you stop looking back at what might have been and start moving ahead with confidence

and faith and new vision for your life. Yes your life is in transition. But when you put your faith in God you know that the challenges ahead are ones that He will help you with. God knew Joshua was going to face some great challenges ahead so He tells him "Be strong and have courage!"

You may be facing some great challenges in your life – but the same God who promised to be with Joshua – promises to be with you too! Don't panic. Don't despair. Put your confidence and faith in the Lord and face the challenges that are before you. Just as Joshua was ready to lead his army against Jericho, he meets up with the Commander of the Armies of the Lord.

Joshua 5:13 "Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" ¹⁴ "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" ¹⁵ The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Before we can win the battle we must know which side we're on. Joshua asked the Commander of the Lord, "Are you for us or for our enemies." (Some people always think it's about us or them) But the angel of the Lord says. I'm not on your side and I'm not on theirs. I am on God's side. "for the commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." The battle is not so you can look great and become rich and famous! The battle belongs to the Lord. The challenges may be great but the conquest is guaranteed if you allow the commander of the Lord's army to be in charge.

III. A Great Conquest

Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" When we obey God's word we are guaranteed success. The Israelites marched around the city for seven days. Seven priests bearing seven trumpets cared from ram's horns led the company. On the seventh day they marched around seven times (which reminds me that sometimes instead of things getting easier, they get tougher before you experience a victory). And on the seventh time around the priests blew their trumpets finishing with one long blast. And the people gave a great shout.

When Israel gave a great shout the bible says the wall fell down flat and the city of Jericho fell into the hands of Joshua and the Israelites. And the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho that day and took everything except the gold and silver which they placed in the treasury of the house of the Lord. Only Rahab and her household were saved and allowed into the Hebrew community. She was the one who hid the two Jewish spies. Later she married Salmon of the tribe of Judah and become the mother of Boaz who in turn married Ruth. Boaz was the great grandfather of King David.

Conclusion

Joshua proved to be a capable and courageous leader. He was a devout warrior who applied himself in his youth. He was a man who achieved a peaceful and honored old age. He was a man who combined strength with gentleness, power with grace and greatness with simplicity. He was a man above all who revered God all the days of his life. In his parting words from public office he told Israel, "Choose you this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Those words have become a model for every Godly leader, every faithful believer, every successful mother and father, every hopeful young person.

You can do like the first generation of Israelites did and waste your life in fear and regret and disappointment. Or you can muster the courage to make some changes and embrace the challenges and conquer your fears and circumstances and let the Lord bless you with success and victory in your life. The choice is yours.