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(Joshua 1)

Intro. When the topic of leadership comes up, it’s easy for us to think of business leaders, political leaders, coaches, teachers, pastors and the like. One leader who stands out in the world is the President of the United States. In the movie “Independence Day,” the whole world was under attack from aliens & a ragtag group of pilots were about to embark on a do-or-die mission of protecting the world. Watch this brief clip as the President rallies the troops (show clip, 2:43). The President’s speech & example gave the servants strength & courage for the fight. As we begin a series on “Moving Forward” from Joshua, today we look at chapter 1 on “Moving Forward: With Strength & Courage.”

Theme: Leadership

Background: Joshua falls on the heels of Deuteronomy, a book where Moses delivers the Law again to the next generation of Israel who were about to enter the Promised Land. Before Moses died, God appointed Joshua as Israel’s next leader, one of two spies who brought a faithful report from Canaan (cf. Numbers 13). Some scholars argue it takes place around 1400 BC (using the 480 years from 970 in 1 Kings 6:1 as literal) & others say around 1250 BC (using the same # as symbolic of 12 generations [but more like 25 years rather than 40 years]).

- Before breaking down the text & sharing areas of application, let me provide a bit more introductory material on some key issues in the Book of Joshua. First, the subject of the land is a major focus in this book, occurring some 87x, for Israel will enter, conquer & claim the Promised Land (God had promised this land to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & their descendants & it occurs throughout the Torah dozens of times). Second, leadership is a big issue in this book—the previous leader Moses is mentioned 57x as a reminder for his wisdom & walk with God, but Joshua is the main human character in this book, for he is the new leader. Joshua’s name means “deliverer,” & the NT equivalent of this Hebrew name is Jesus (Savior, Deliverer). Third, the topic of rest pervades this book as Joshua leads the people into the Land to conquer the unbelieving nations & find rest from their journeys & their fighting. It becomes a picture of the rest Christ offers in Him for those who are tired of fighting sin in their lives & surrender to Him & the future home He has for His people in heaven.
- Some people view Joshua 1 as lessons for leadership & it certainly speaks to that issue. It also serves as a guide for the people of God to follow their leaders. After all, leaders without followers are just out taking a stroll. Thus, I want to address both groups today, first the leaders & then the servants/followers

I. For leaders, move forward with strength & courage

- “be strong & courageous” occurs 4x (1:6-7, 9, 18)
 - A. In light of the Lord’s provisions (1:2-4, 10-15)**
 - These first few verses of Joshua not only serve as an introduction to the book but also as a bit of an outline as God provides a new leader, provides him with strength & courage, provides him with His Word & provides him with the resources to accomplish the task of entering the Promised Land
 - “I have given to you” (1:3)—the perfect tense as though it is a divine decree in which the future is “already irrevocably decided” (Soggin in Woudstra, 59)
 - Whatever the Lord calls you to do as a leader, He will provide you with what you need (wisdom, direction, training, etc.)
 - B. In light of the Lord’s presence (1:5, 9, 17)**
 - Did you see how often God reminds Joshua of His presence with him? 3x in this short narrative. Hebrews 13:5 applies this promise to all believers for the Lord says “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (cf. Matthew 28:20)
 - This serves as a reassuring word that the Lord will assist you in the mission He’s given to you
 - C. In light of the Lord’s precepts (1:7-8)**

- Joshua was a great leader, not so much because of his skill with the sword (& he was a great commander) but in his submission to the Word of God (1:8) & the God of the Word (5:13-15)
- He meditated on God’s Word continually—meditate means “to mutter” (reading Scripture aloud [cf. Acts 8:26-40], talking about it to yourself & others [cf. Deuteronomy 6:6-9])—the principle for the sola Scriptura of the Reformation

Illus: One reason I challenge you to read through your Bible each year is so you encounter the full counsel of God & become reminded of all it teaches (some of you have told me you don’t do it now but focus on a book or two of the Bible—that’s good, but it isn’t as good as the whole Bible, because no single book has the whole counsel of God—of course, since it takes less than 15 minutes a day to read through the Bible in a year, you could read through it & take time to study a portion of it in detail)

II. For servants, move forward with strength & courage

A. By fulfilling God’s promise responsibly (1:2-4, 6, 11, 13-15)

- Notice how God gives the land to Israel, but He calls on them to act & go to battle in order to inherit the land
- We don’t often think about this aspect of God’s promises—many of them are conditioned on our faithful response to the Lord (cf. Acts 2:38-39)
- Notice also the notion of “inheritance” (1:6)—it occurs through Joshua & suggests Israel has a claim upon the land over its former inhabitants, because God gives it to them

B. By following your pastor respectfully (1:16-18)

- Not only do we see Israel claiming allegiance & obedience to Joshua here in going to battle, but the NT provides numerous examples of the church following her pastor’s lead (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17)

Illus: I served one church as a pastor & all they wanted was a chaplain—someone to preach on Sundays, visit the sick in the hospital & preach funerals. Another church called me as their pastor but didn’t want to follow me. Many of them had left a church with a long-time minister who was unethical & they judged me by him—after 3 years, I called them on it & some began following me. I came here 6.5 years ago & there have been times you didn’t want to follow me (calling staff, exploring church name change, 2nd service, etc.)—I don’t mention those things because I’m mad about it (I get over things pretty quickly), but I’ve never had anyone come up to me & say, “Pastor, we were wrong to do such & such” (except one person on the staff person & one on the 2nd service)—it’s not that you haven’t always followed my lead, but that you haven’t felt any remorse or conviction for not doing so—God doesn’t honor a disobedient people

- I don’t mean to make a blanket statement like “everyone was wrong on these issues,” because many have been supportive, but key people have led some to disobey—Ron Pierson is the best I know at respecting pastoral authority & his training at North Phoenix Baptist Church a few decades ago had a lot to do with that

Conc. If you have seen the movie “Independence Day,” you know the pilots found a weakness in the defense of the ships of the aliens & they began defeating them. But they defeated them because they followed the leadership of their President, who in turn gave the orders to notify the rest of the world on how to defeat them. With a new pastor potentially coming on board, our church is poised to “Move Forward,” but we need “Strength & Courage” as you follow your leaders & as we all follow our Lord. But you cannot follow the Lord unless you have surrendered your life to Him through repentance & faith. Do so today & let’s “Move Forward” together!