



New Preparations

Lesson Aim: To note the infallibility of God in the midst of the many failures of His people.

L1. Text: Joshua 1:1-9. **Date:** April 1959.

Topic: God: Infallibility of; Presence of.

This study of the Old Testament is essential to a proper understanding of the New Testament. The Old Testament records God's workings with man before the coming of Christ, just as the New Testament records His workings after Christ. God's revelation of Himself is not complete without both Old and New Testaments. Let us study these lessons prayerfully.

The book of Joshua was written by an unknown number of authors. Much was written by Joshua, himself, with other sections (such as the record of his death) added by another writer. The book records the history of Israel while under the command of Joshua; the entrance of the Hebrews into Canaan; their conquest of the greater part of the country; the division of the territory among the tribes; and the settlement of the nation in that country. The period of time covered by this history is approximately 26 or 27 years. The book seeks to show the faithfulness of God in the perfect accomplishment of all His promises to the patriarchs.

Joshua was a young adult at the time of the exodus from Egypt. He was Moses' minister and companion through all the wilderness journey, being one of the spies who gave a favorable report concerning Canaan. He was selected of God to follow Moses as head of the nation of Israel. This lesson records the first move which Joshua made when God called him to assume his duties. He is now ninety three years old as he takes the leadership of Israel.

EXPOSITION

I. God's Purposes Never Fail for Lack of a Leader, 1:1-4.

The Scripture history records that Moses was not allowed to enter into the Land of Promise because of his sin against God, Numbers 20:8-12. However, Moses did not immediately die, but continued to lead Israel until the Jordan river was reached. There he went up on the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and saw the Promised Land which he never entered. Moses died there and was buried on the mountain side in an unmarked grave. Israel spent thirty days in mourning for him and then the Lord spoke.

1. God has new leaders to replace the old, verses 1-2. When Moses had died, God spoke to Joshua (whether by vision, or in what other manner we are not informed) to say that now that Moses was dead it was time for Joshua to assume the leadership of Israel. Moses had fulfilled God's purpose in him and it was useless to tarry longer and mourn over him. The plan of God must be performed. It was a great task which Joshua assumed. He must govern a rebellious people, combat a warlike and formidable enemy, and cross a river which was flooded far outside its banks. He needed courage from God!

Many times have churches experienced what Israel now experienced, the loss of a long-trusted and faithful leader. However, God did not forsake Israel when Moses died and neither will He forsake His people today. A certain pastor may have led a church for many years and through many trials and victories. It may seem to many of the people that the church cannot do without him. But if the church has been grounded in the doctrines of the Bible and are faithful to God, they can change leadership and go right on to greater victories. No man is indispensable to the Lord's work! When the Lord finished the work He intends to do with one man, he always has another to take up there and lead the people on. Just as Joshua was more qualified to lead the conquest of the land than was Moses, so God has a man who can properly lead the people under every circumstance. Let none ever despair.

2. God's promises and purposes do not change when men change, verses 2c-4. In order to encourage Joshua to take control of Israel and begin the conquest of the land, the Lord reminds him of the covenant He had made to give this land to Israel. A comparison of verses three and four with Deuteronomy 11:24 will show God repeats exactly the boundary which He had before mentioned in the promise. The death of Moses did not change the purpose of God nor make void the promises and covenants which He had made before.

In fact, God is never careless about the performing of His promises, II Peter 3:9. He is always reliable and trustworthy and we can be sure His

promises will be performed in the proper time, Romans 4:21. All the works of God are fully known to Him from the creation and He would promise nothing which He did not intend to fulfill, nor enter covenants which He would refuse to keep. Even if we reject the assurance He gives and do not believe, He abides faithful, II Timothy 2:13. Thank God, He is not fickle as is a man. Leadership changes, world conditions change, nations rise and fall, but in the midst of it all we have a God in whom there is no variation nor shadow which would be caused by turning, James 1:17. We can depend upon His being faithful!

3. God makes His own selection of His leaders, Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9-12. When God informed Moses that he would die and not enter the land of Canaan, Moses immediately prayed that someone would be set over the people to lead them in. Now God answers, *“Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight,”* Numbers 27:18-19. Thus was Joshua consecrated to this high office.

Isn't it wonderful that God calls His own workers? I'm so glad it is not left up to any one of us or to any committee which we could appoint. We human beings are subject to error, but we know that whatever God does it is done for eternity. Although we may not always fully understand the Lord's leading and may honestly question whether He calls us to a certain service, we can be sure that God calls those whom He chooses. This is a Bible doctrine.

II. God's Presence Will Supply His Leaders, 1:5-6.

Someone has well said, “whom God chooses, He calls; whom He calls, He qualifies; whom He qualifies He grants victories.” It is well demonstrated in the case of Joshua. To take the leadership of Israel was a great undertaking, and Joshua would need more assurance of Divine presence. God's *“I will be with thee,”* verse 5, is the guarantee that all would turn out well.

1. God's presence assures of victory, verse 5a. The first promise is that God's presence will cause every enemy to be unsuccessful in resisting Joshua as he leads Israel. Perhaps the greatest demonstration of this truth is recorded in Joshua chapter 6 when the walls of the great city of Jericho fell down flat under the hand of God so that Israel took possession of the city. Well might Joshua and all Israel rejoice under these circumstances. It was

positive proof that God was fighting for them. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* Romans 8:31.

The modern Christian may well ponder this truth. Before any enterprise is undertaken, whether religious or business or social, it would be wise to ask, “is God with me in this?” All life should be regulated under the formula, *“If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that,”* James 4:15. It is wise for one to refrain from any activity or stay away from any place where he does not feel God would be willing for him to be. Victory over temptation and success in Christian endeavor is assured only as one walks in the conscious presence of his Lord. With Him, no power can overcome us, but without Him we are able to do nothing. See John 15:5.

2. God’s presence reveals His faithfulness, verse 5b. He who is allied with the Almighty needs no other allies. The promise is “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” To “fail” literally signifies “to let sink, to let grow slack and fall down.” It implies a loosing or relaxing of one’s grasp and the consequent falling down of the hands. Thus God promises to keep a firm hold of His servant, to not let go of him, to not resign him up to the power of the enemies. (Compare Deuteronomy 31:6-8) This continual presence of the Lord will assure Joshua of the Divine faithfulness. God engages Himself never to leave or be wanting to Joshua!

We rejoice in this grand assurance that God will preserve His own. This leads us to hold the precious doctrine of *“the security of the believer.”* Let us consider, however, that God’s preservation of His people extends further than salvation. He is likewise faithful to keep from harm those who are busy in His service. Paul found Him sufficient when he stood on trial before Caesar, concluding, *“The Lord stood with me and strengthened me . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of Lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom,”* II Timothy 4:17-18. God is faithful to never forget nor forsake us as we seek to do His will in Christian service. He is eternally faithful.

3. God’s presence inspires to heroic endeavor, verse 6. Someone has said, *“If I knew Christ was in the next room praying for me, I would not be afraid to face ten thousand foes alone. And yet, the Bible says He is in heaven making intercession, Distance makes no difference with God, so I’ll still fear no opponent in Christian service.”* Like Joshua, we will learn to *“be strong and of a good courage”* if we truly become conscious of the presence of God. This expression implies the utmost degree of vigorous and determined action prompted by a spirit of energy. It is the equivalent of the expression, “Be strong and act like a man.” The Christian who is conscious

of the Divine presence will find this is not impossible expectation nor unreasonable demand.

It was this consciousness which enabled such heroic service by men as Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and others. It was this consciousness which strengthened the heroic martyrs of the dark ages and the Reformation period to stand firm in the face of death. It was this consciousness which caused thousands of Christian witnesses to bury themselves among pagan peoples in far-away lands when relatives, churches, and civilization were left far behind. It was this consciousness which inspired all great evangelists, pastors, teachers, and faithful Christians to perform their service. It is this same consciousness of the presence of God which challenges you and me to the most heroic and self-sacrificing type of service for Christ Jesus.

III. God Places Great Demands Upon His Leaders, 1:7-8.

1. God demands a steadfast courage, verse 7a. The word “*only*” in the beginning of this verse shows that a condition is involved. God is saying in verses six and seven that if He gives the land to Joshua and Israel they must have steadfast courage which expresses itself in a careful obedience of the Divine commands. Only a courage which did not waver would be sufficient for Joshua in the experiences which awaited him in the conquest of Palestine.

Courage in God’s service is not a matter for Old Testament saints alone. The modern Christian still needs it if he would serve the Lord most perfectly. It is never easy to stand against sin and Satan. There will be continual temptation to soften the message or to ease up on the demands of Christ. One cannot do this and still be a faithful witness, however, Jesus knew these trials would come and sought to prepare us for them. He tells us, “*In the world ye shall have tribulations; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,*” John 16:33. According to the examples in Hebrews 11, the best source of courage is a steadfast faith in the continual presence of God. This holy boldness which is inspired by faith will be a witness for our Lord Christ, Acts 4:13. The coward reveals a lack of faith and is a reproach to Christian influence. If one learns to “practice the presence of God” (that is, to cultivate the realization of God’s presence) he will find courage is a natural quality of his witness for his Lord.

2. God demands a strict observance of His precepts, verse 7b. The condition to entrance and prosperity in the Land of Promise, suggested above, is the constant and rigid observance of the Divine command. A

steadfast observance of these mandates would require a great courage—in fact, a greater courage than that necessary to face the formidable enemies who lived in the land. The person who would truly follow his Lord must make these precepts his rule of life. He is never to deviate nor turn his eyes away from them. This will guarantee a life which is marked by wise conduct and prudent discretion. Bush's notes on this passage suggests, "those only can reasonably expect the blessing of God upon their temporal affairs, who make His word their rule, and consequently walk by it in all circumstances; and this is the way of true wisdom." In view of this fact, sin is the highest folly and virtue, the only true wisdom. Obedience to God's will has always brought blessings, while disobedience is always the forerunner of sorrow and suffering, Isaiah 1:9-20. Only those who sincerely obey can be said to be true servants of God, Romans 6:16. The injunctions of God are always more important than the opinions or rules of men, Acts 5:29. Disobedience is placed on the same level with idolatry and outright rebellion, I Samuel 15:22-23. Such obedience will bring the grand assurance of God's presence and approval, Jeremiah 7:23. Surely it is true that the happy Christian is the one who humbly obeys as fully as he has power and self-control to do. Faithfulness is always rewarded and disobedience is never overlooked. Just reward will come to both.

3. God demands his intimate acquaintance with His Word, verse 8ab. God commands Joshua that the Divinely written law shall be a theme of constant study, thought, and conversation—the rule of both his private and official life. His mind was to be engaged in understanding the Law so that his life could be lived in obedience to it. For the law to be "in the mouth," it is not necessary to be constantly preaching or teaching it. When one is reading it intelligently for himself it is "in his mouth." What a difference it would make in Israel if Joshua daily read from the Law and sought to obey its commands and all the nation imitated him! Many of the problems of the nation would never have come if this injunction has been obeyed.

Obedience to the Word of God still necessitates a knowledge of it. Paul's admonition to "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,*" is still valid, (II Timothy 2:15). Still, the man in whom God delights is the one of whom it can be said, "*His delight is in the law of the Lord: and in his law doth he meditate day and night,*" Psalm 1:2. The modern Christian should never be satisfied with a superficial or partial knowledge of the Bible. If he would "*observe to do according to all that is written therein*" he must know what is written there. Students of the Bible should be concerned with the teaching of the Word. They should know something about the order of the

books of the Bible; whether a certain book is history, poetry, prophecy, epistle, ect.; who wrote the books and to whom each was written. A knowledge of the history and geography of Bible lands will also aid in understanding the Bible. The customs of the people must also be studied for the fullest grasp of Scripture truth (as, for instance, the wedding pictured in Matthew 25:1-13).

QUESTIONS

1. What events are recorded in the book of Joshua?
2. Tell all you know about the former life of Joshua.
3. Why did Moses not enter the Promised Land?
4. Did the change in leadership make any change in God's purpose promises?
5. What assurances came with the promise of God's presence with Joshua?
6. What demands did God place upon Joshua concerning the Law?
7. What rewards were promised Joshua if he studied and kept the Law?
8. Name three lessons which the modern Christian should get from this study.