
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2023

Choosing Faith

Following God where you've never been before.

Three Key Concepts

- God's ways are unknown—but not unknowable.

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge!

*How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions
and his ways!*

Romans 11.33

*Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know
about things to come.*

Jeremiah 33.3

- God's intention is that your life would have eternal worth by fulfilling His plans for you in the present. "Other than" or "less than" is worthless.

*Many are the plans in a person's heart,
but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.*

Proverbs 19.21

"If their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail."

Acts 5.38

*"Only one life
will soon
be past;
only what's
done
for Christ
will last."*

C.T. Studd

- The issue is whether you will believe that He knows what is best, and trust what He has for you.

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29.11-13

Finally, Forty Years Later!

- Forty years later— forty years after seeing God's promise ready to be fulfilled, forty years after the Great Rebellion, forty years of waiting and waiting and waiting . . .

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them.

Joshua 1.1-2

- Think of it: ten fearful and faithless men changed the destiny of millions—preventing them from experiencing God’s intended will and blessing.
- Ten men who didn’t trust God robbed forty years from the lives of Joshua and Caleb—and from their children and grandchildren.

- These ten men who chose failure instead of faith; they returned from their reconnaissance with their minds already made up; despite all that they had seen God do for Israel, they had never learned to really trust His power or faithfulness, and in their moment of destiny, their perspective was distorted by their fears.
- Failing to comprehend the purposes and promises of God for their generation brought consequences on them and everyone else.

There is a dramatic story in the Palestinian Talmud which teaches that when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, every year on the night of the 9th of Av—the national day of mourning—each member of the failed Exodus generation dug a grave and slept in it. The following morning, some 15,000 individuals were found dead in their graves. According to tradition, this harrowing ritual was repeated annually for forty years, until the original 600,000 Israelites who left Egypt—those who doubted that they could attain the Promised Land—finally died off.

God's Covenant Commitment

- After dealing with the generation that failed, God gave Joshua the blueprint for success accompanied by a priceless promise.

*No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life.
As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave
you nor forsake you.*

Joshua 1.5

covenant:
*an irrevocable
agreement between
two parties;
the root word
means "cutting" in
reference to
the ritual
(see Genesis 15)
that characterized
the consequences
of breaking
the agreement*

- The writer to Hebrews reminds his readers that the value of this promise exceeds any other measure of success or sufficiency.

God has said,

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

So we say with confidence,

“The LORD is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?” (13.5-6) ¹

¹ Psalm 57.3-4; 118.6

- God reiterated that He would be with Joshua “wherever you go.” Through the prophet Isaiah, God emphasized this in scenario after scenario. God is more than just “there”—He is with *you*! This is His guarantee to everyone who is following His purposes for them.

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (v. 9)

*Blessed are
those who
have learned
to acclaim You,
who walk
in the light
of Your presence,
O LORD.*

Psalm 89.15

- Faced with relentless attacks constant danger, and overwhelming uncertainty, David asserted this same position of promise and faith—

But when I am afraid,

I will put my trust in You.

I will praise God for what He has promised.

I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?

What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalm 57.3-4

*“So do not fear,
for I am with you;
do not be dismayed,
for I am your God.
I will strengthen you
and help you;
I will uphold you
with my righteous
right hand.”*

Isaiah 41.10

- Here is an important principle:

When you are in a “season of nothing” and the fulfillment of God’s promises is nowhere in sight, *praise Him* for His promises— for it is His character to be faithful to His promises.¹ Any other response, active (e.g. complaining) or passive (despairing, losing heart or hope), is a faithless response that is inevitably spiritually disabling.

¹ see Psalm 33.4; 145.13b; also Joshua 21.45; 23.14

Crossing Over

- In their moment of decision and destiny, the chosen generation was paralyzed by fear. Forty years later, that moment of decision is facing the “restart” generation. It is time to go!

So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your provisions 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.’”

Joshua 1.10-11

- In preparing themselves to cross over, Joshua also told them to "consecrate" (KJV: "sanctify") themselves .

Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you."

Joshua 3.5

- The word "consecrate" is integral to following God and loving Him wholeheartedly. It means "to be holy, set apart, dedicated." I cannot serve God's purposes with a divided or compromised perspective. He has chosen me; I am not my own. I have the priceless honor of serving Him. That should motivate me to live for Him, and Him alone.

Following the Ark

- Central to Israel's identity was their covenant relationship with God— a sacred commitment, sealed in blood, in which both parties, fully and absolutely, pledged themselves to the welfare and future of one another.

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Exodus 19.5-6

- Israel was YHWH's chosen people, holy and set apart from all others for the exclusive purpose of revealing His truth to the nations (righteousness, salvation, judgment).

Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Deuteronomy 4.6

- In this covenant relationship, Israel was not to worship YHWH as the other nations worshipped their gods. As those chosen by YHWH to represent Him to the nations, they were to be a “holy” people, “because I, the Lord your God, am holy.”
- Through the Book of Instruction and the worship protocol of the Tabernacle, they were able to understand how to represent YHWH: His exclusive people, representing the exclusive God, by revealing His exclusive character.

- Central to understanding this was the **Ark of the LORD's Covenant**. This sacred piece of sanctuary furniture, secured in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle, represented all that constituted the covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel.
- Inside the Ark were three objects: a pot of manna, Aaron's staff, and the Ten Commandments.

- These three objects represented the basis on which this sacred relationship was lived out—
 - Instructions that defined Israel as God's holy people, enabling them to do His will and experience His blessing;
 - God's promise to be their sufficiency in everything;
 - The spiritual leadership and direction that would guide them.

- Joshua instructed the people to follow the Ark so that they would know which way to go.

“When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.

Joshua 3.3-4

- The Ark led the way; if we want to be in God’s will and fulfill His purposes, we must be attentive to His leading in our lives.

The First Step of Faith

- God timed the crossing of the Jordan River to be when it was at its flood stage—when it was humanly impossible to cross.

It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away . . .

Joshua 3.15-16a

- God intentionally leads us into impossibilities; they are an integral part of following God. God is pursuing His glory—the recognition that He alone is the true God. And so He brings us face to face with impossibilities and the choice of whether we will trust Him.
- This first step of faith changed everything! The impossibility before us won't change until we take the first step of faith. ***Only then*** will we see what God can do.

How Much Glory?

- The greater the impossibility, the greater the glory obtained for God. When we settle for no more than what the gods of others can accomplish, we deny God His glory in our lives.

Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

Joshua 5.1

- If I truly see God, I won't see the difficulties, the impossibilities, or the "what if" issues because He obscures everything. Standing in front of these, God obscures and dwarfs all of these concerns. (The fact is the giants were grasshoppers in God's sight. Israel couldn't see right!)
- When we put those things in front of God, when they become what we are seeing, God becomes secondary.
- When I choose faith, seeing God instead of the unknown or the impossible, He never, ever fails to show Himself as my faithful and all-sufficient God who is at work to fulfill His eternal purposes in my life.