

LIVING BY THE RULES Sunday School- June 12, 2011

Unifying Topic: GOD HAS EXPECTATIONS

Lesson Text

I. Obeying God's Word (Joshua 1:7-9)

II. Helping One Another (Joshua 1:10-16)

The Main Thought: Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. (Joshua 1:7, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People generally expect rules to be associated with all endeavors of life. Why does it seem that those who violate regulations prosper and are successful? The bible teaches that prosperity and success is contingent on obeying God.

Lesson Aim: To emphasize that Joshua's success rested on his obedience to God's Law.

Life Aim: To teach your students that obedience to God's Law provides us with God's security and allows us to live in line with His requirements of holiness.

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- 1:7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.
- 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt have good success.
- 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.
- 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,
- 1:11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.
- 1:12 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,
- 1:13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.
- 1:14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;
- 1:15 Until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.
- 1:16 And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

HISTORY:

When the days of mourning for Moses had passed (Deut. 34:8-12) there was a call to service for Joshua to be the new leader of Israel. Israel was on along the east bank of the Jordan River, the very edge of the Promised Land. When the last of the older generation had died, there was a new generation who had become adults prepared to claim the Promise. Joshua assumed active command of the Israelites. "Joshua" means "Jehovah is salvation." Joshua is the son of Nun, the son of Elishama, prince of the tribe of Ephraim. The Greek form of "Joshua" is "Jesus." Until the time of Moses' death, God had spoken to Moses; now, He speaks to Joshua in the same manner. The first directive God spoke to Joshua about was to cross the Jordan into their Promised Land. God had shown Moses the land of promise. Josh.1:4 was everything "from the wilderness (the Negeb desert in the south) to the Lebanon mountains in the north, and the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Euphrates River in the east, including all the land of the Hittites." He assured him that no man would be able to stand against him for the Lord would be with him in battle. He commanded him to be strong and courageous and adhere to the Law of Moses, and assured him that as He had been with Moses He would be with him. ¹We know how courageous he was, because he wanted to go into the Promised Land the first time they spied it out. He was confident they could take it, even if there were giants in the land. Joshua's confidence was not in his own ability, but in God's ability. And God is just reassuring Joshua that he would win the battle, and indeed, divide the land. These are God's people, and He will protect them.

LESSON:

Joshua 1:7-9 Obeying God's Word

1:7 Only be thou strong and very courageous: God repeats the same words from verse 6. When someone repeats

¹ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/joshua/01.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

something to you twice, it must be important! God told Joyce Meyer one day, "*Joyce you can choose to be pitiful or powerful.*" And I believe God is telling us the same thing today. You have a choice: choose to be strong and very courageous. The repetition of the command to be strong indicates that God is interested not only in the spiritual character of His servants, but in their physical actions as well. Joshua would be going up against some mighty and some fortified cities that he had not encountered, as being "*the*" leader. Therefore, for Joshua to succeed, he had to adhere to the divineness of God.

1:7b that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: There is more to just being the leader of a company, a people, or a task. Joshua must himself be under command, for no man's dignity or dominion sets him above the Law of God. "*Under command*" starts with humility. Though Joshua is the commander of God's people, yet he is subject, and obliged to observe "*all*" of God's commands and do them. The Law was God's Word. It hadn't changed! And for Joshua to observe the Word (The Law), it meant to examine and study the same Law Moses commanded. Joshua only had the first five books of the Bible as God's Law in which Moses had written. The law Moses gave them from God was a blessing, if it was kept.

1:7c turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest: This is an absolute must! Don't deviate from it. This shows that with God's assistance promised to him and the Israelites, was conditional, and might justly be withdrawn upon their breach of the conditions. The Law was not to be adjusted to the right or the left; nothing added or taken away from it. When obedience is learned, God is free to bless us. Joshua is to make the Law of God his rule. His success, growth, and prosperity depended on him not turning from God or His Word. And wherever God leads Joshua, he would prosper.

1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: When it says "*shall not depart out of thy mouth*", it's meant as a figure of speech, meaning it has to be in the mouth before it can leave or not leave the mouth. He had to read it often. What you keep reading, what you keep speaking; what you keep meditating on won't depart, won't go away, won't leave you. It's in your mind and it shall come up every time you open your mouth. If you had a pop quiz tomorrow, what did you learn yesterday? What sunk in? Whatever sunk in will not go away; will not depart from your mouth because it's on your lips. That's an action process that causes fruition. It will be a time when it is not enough to hear and read the Word; to recommend and admire it; to know and remember it; to talk and discuss it, but we must do it!

1:8b but thou shalt meditate therein day and night: He is charged to meditate therein day and night, that he might understand instruction. Meditate means to think about; turn over in your mind; think through the implications for application; to resolve in the mind. What speaks to you in the verse you're meditating on? Ask God what am I to learn from this scripture? That means you have taken time out to allow God to teach you. It will keep teaching every time you meditate on it for any specific situation.

1:8c that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt have good success: He is told again (v7a) to observe to do what has been written. That means all is written for his instruction and his direction. If we want to be strong, courageous, prosperous, and have good success, we also will have to follow God's written Word. If we fail, it will not be because of God.

1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: How many times does someone have to tell you the same thing before it's followed? How many times did your mom tell you something before you did it? This may not be the case for Joshua, but as God re-iterates it to him, it's ringing in his ear time and time again that he would be consistent to follow God.

1:9b be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest: The enemies are going to be numerous and powerful. It will not be the same way as when he was apart of the 12 spies when the others didn't believe God. He would not have to concur with anybody else except God and His Word! He was not afraid then and he will continue to not be fearful or saddened. Wherever they went, God was going to be with them. What a Promise! Notice the underlined words, all words of encouragement to you from God!

Joshua 1:10-16 Helping One Another

1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying: Joshua acted immediately as commander-in-chief.

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This is not about being positive; this is about being obedient! The Promised Land was on the west side of Jordan. The Israelites were still on the east side. Joshua gave command to the officers. Moses organized the nation this way so that he could communicate quickly with the people through the officers (tribal leaders) (Num.1:16). The officers were now under the command of Joshua. Here Joshua assembles the leaders to give them God's orders to give to the people.

1:11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying: There is only one agenda. Joshua calls together the leaders of the nation to give them a command, not to ask their advice. The word "*host*" means "*camp*." The officers were to go through the camp and command the people to prepare themselves; get ready; this is it! You have the command, now do it!

1:11b Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan: There is no time to waste, however, ²There is no wasted time with God. The waiting for God is often the most difficult part for us, but days of waiting are always days of preparation in God's work. They lasted 40 years. ³For forty years each family has depended on the supernatural provision of manna every morning, and the manna is still falling. It's going to stop after Israel enters the land (Josh. 5:10-12). The word "*victuals*" means food. What Joshua is telling the people now before they have crossed the river is that it is important for them to change their mindset, to plan for physical sustenance to keep up their strength, to start thinking about living off the land. They needed to prepare all types of food for the trip as they were to finally pass over the Jordan. He tells the people to prepare food, for in three days they will cross the Jordan (The crossing happens in Chapter 3). The number three is significant in many ways. This is not a maybe, "*ye shall pass over*"—it is a truth!

1:11c ...to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it: This is why they were to prepare, to possess the Promise! A step of action comes before possession! It was already God's plan for them.

1:12 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying: Joshua reminds the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh of their previous promise and responsibilities. The Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh had already asked for an inheritance of the land before the Jordan (east of the Promised Land) (Num.32:5). Things were more appealing to the eye and where there was ease, comfort, plenty and riches as the world would look at it rather than go into their Promised Land for them; and they were already there. In Numbers 32 Moses saw the request from these two and a half tribes as sinful rebellion. However, he knew that it would be discouraging to the rest of the tribes if all didn't go in to fight. ⁴Moses had agreed on condition that they must agree to leave their families behind and go into Canaan with the other tribes when they went to fight to take the land. After the other tribes had taken their lands, then the 2½ tribes could return to their families and live in the land they had received (Num.32:20-23; 29-32).

1:13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land: Joshua is continuing his command and calling their remembrance back to that conversation with Moses. The Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh wanted the grazing land on the east side of Jordan, and Moses let them have it, with the condition that they would fight with the other tribes and conquer to take the Promised Land of Canaan for Israel. Although the Lord had given them the land; they could not begin to settle down on it until their part of the promise was done. They had an obligation to Israel and he was letting them know that God had given them "*rest*" (provided a home; settle you) and the promise of their land (given them the region).

1:14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them: Their wives, little ones, and cattle remained in the land—same words spoken in Numbers 32:26-27. It was always contingent on them fighting for and with Israel to conquer the Land of Promise. Only after the land was conquered could they return to their homes. Now it was time for these 2½ tribes to live up to their agreement. Joshua wanted and needed all of their mighty men of valour armed to help fight.

1:15 Until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the

² http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=7508&commInfo=31&topic=Joshua&ar=Jos_1_11

³ <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/6323/4456.html>

⁴ <http://www.religionofjesuschrist.com/commentary/history/joshua.pdf>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Lord's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising: Had the two Tribes and the half Tribe permitted God to choose for them, how much happier and safer they would have been! But they chose for themselves land on the other side of Jordan, and brought upon themselves many sorrows and early captivity (1Kgs.22:3). Such is the sad experience of Christian people who plan for themselves and do not have fellowship with the thoughts of God. God's plan was, first to conquer Canaan, and then the land stretching from the Jordan to the Euphrates. The two Tribes and the half Tribe thought the reverse would be the better plan. Man's plans are never the better plan than God's plan! Have you ever looked at it like this? — ⁵This is like Christians who do not get completely involved in Christian things. They do not go to church very often. They do not meet with other Christians. They do not help in their local church. So they do not get all that God wants them to have. These 2½ tribes were not released from their obligation until several years (read Chapter 22); until they had helped conquer the land with their brethren. God wanted all 12 tribes to stand together in these battles for the land. They could not possess unless they helped conquer. "*Toward the sunrising*" meant their possession was located on the east of Jordan.

1:16 And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go: It was the same yes to Joshua as they gave to Moses. They have had ample time to prepare their families to survive, until they return. They are eager to keep their word to God. They will go into battle, wherever Joshua sends them. They were so happy with their promised land, they were eager to do God's will. Now that's encouragement for any leader!

SUMMARY:

The book of Joshua concerns itself with the change in leadership from Moses to Joshua and begins with the crossing of the Jordan. Joshua was a leader long before he became leader, if you know what I mean. In Numbers 27, God says to Moses to lay his hand on Joshua. He had been preparing him for the very moment. Now God tells him to be strong and very courageous; study to do; continue to follow according to the instructions of the Law of Moses. Don't allow it to depart from you. Night and day, I want you to observe it! God tells him again, don't be afraid, don't be dismayed, but be strong and courageous, for I will be with you wherever you go (*all paraphrased*). Joshua implements the first instruction from God. He does it with authority, commanding the officers of the people to go through the camp announcing to prepare enough food, for within three days we're all going to pass over this Jordan; the Jordan that it took 40yrs to get to. We will now go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God has given to possess.

⁶There are two geographical areas contrasted in these verses. First there is the land of Canaan across the Jordan to the west, the Promised Land. Twice it is called the place that the Lord gives them and twice a place of rest. God's desire is for them to enter into the land of Canaan. The contrasting land is that to the east of the Jordan, the lands of Bashan and Gilead and Moab. Twice these are called "*the land which Moses gave you.*" Apparently, their first concern was making a living and not entering into abundant spiritual life. They would rather have had large flocks and herds than live with their brothers and sisters in the inheritance that God gave them. In contrast to the concern of the two and a half tribes is Joshua's concern. He cares about unity and about the common good of the nation. He urges these tribes to keep the promises they made because he wants to guard against any estrangement among the people. He is concerned that Israel be a united people both in conquering the land and in worshipping the Lord. Joshua asks them to send all their fighting men (mighty men of valour) to help fight on the other side of the river.

But as they've always said: "*All that you command us we will do, and wheresoever you send us, we will go.*" They stuck to it! In their receiving anything, they had to live by and obey the rules set forth by Moses, then by Joshua. God expected each one to go by these stipulations: obey His word and help one another. Say yes to Jesus and mean it?

APPLICATION:

Three things: Resolve; Remind; Act—

1) Resolve to set aside time each day to read and think about God's Word. 2) Remind yourself of God's Word day and night. 3) Act today on what you know God has said by obeying.

⁵ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/joshua-lbw.htm>

⁶ <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/6323/4456.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>