

Standing With Faith To Move Forward

Joshua 3



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Joshua 3:7–17 (NKJV)

7 And the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

8 You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.’ ”

9 So Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.”

10 And Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites:

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11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.

12 Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe.

13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.”

14 So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people,

15 and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest),
16 that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho.
17 Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

Standing With Faith To Move Forward

- As you study the book of Joshua, keep in mind that this book deals with much more than ancient history—what God did centuries ago for the Jews. It's about your life and the life of the church today—what God wants to do here and now for those who trust Him.
- The Book of Joshua is about the victory of faith and the glory that comes to God when His people trust and obey.
- In the Christian life, you're either an overcomer or you've been overcome; a victor or a victim.

“He Brought Us Out ... That He Might Bring Us In”

- God didn't save us to make statues out of us and put us on exhibition.
- He saved us to make soldiers out of us and move us forward by faith to claim our rich inheritance in Jesus Christ. Moses said it perfectly:

Deuteronomy 6:23 (NKJV) Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers.

Salvation Is Only The Beginning

- Too many of God's people have the mistaken idea that salvation—being delivered from the bondage of Egypt—is all that's involved in the Christian life; but salvation is only the beginning.
- Both in our personal spiritual growth and in our service for the Lord, “there remains very much land yet to be possessed.”

Joshua 13:1 (NKJV) Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: “You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

Salvation Is Only The Beginning

- The theme of the Book of Joshua is the theme of the Book of Hebrews: “Let us go on” (Heb. 6:1); and the only way to go on is by faith.
- Unbelief says, “Let’s go back to where it’s safe”; but faith says, “Let’s go forward to where God is working” (see Num. 14:1–4).

Salvation Is Only The Beginning

- God has “brought us out that He might bring us in,” but too often we fail to “enter in because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 3:19 (NKJV) So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

- In Joshua 3 and 4, God illustrates for us essentials for moving ahead by faith and claiming all that He has for us: the Word of faith, the walk of faith, and the witness of faith.

The Word Of Faith

(Josh. 3:1–13)

- Like Moses before him, Joshua received his orders from the Lord, and he obeyed them by faith.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- It has been well said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence but obeying in spite of consequence.

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The Word Of Faith

(Josh. 3:1–13)

- When you read Hebrews 11, the great “faith chapter” of Scripture, you discover that the people mentioned all did something because they believed God.
- What are you believing God to do in your life as you stand on the word?

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Faith Isn't A Passive Feeling; It Is An Active Force.

- Because Abraham believed God, he left Ur and headed for Canaan.
- Because Moses believed God, he defied the gods of Egypt and led the Jews to freedom.
- Because Gideon believed God, he led a small band of Jews to defeat the huge Midianite army.

Living faith always leads to action.

James 2:26 (NKJV) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

- In this paragraph, you find five different messages, all of them based on the Word of God, which is the “word of faith”.
- The people obeyed these messages by faith, and God took them over the river.

Romans 10:8 (NKJV) But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”

(that is, the word of faith which we preach):

The Message To The People

(Vv. 1–4)

Joshua 3:1–4 (NKJV)

1 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over.

2 So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp;

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The Message To The People

(Vv. 1–4)

3 and they commanded the people, saying, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.

4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.”

- Joshua ordered the camp to move ten miles from The Acacia Grove (Shittim) to the Jordan; and no doubt the people in Jericho watched this march with great apprehension.
- It probably took Israel a day to make this journey; they rested another day; and on the third day, the officers gave them their orders: The people were to cross the river, following the ark of the covenant.
- The Ark of the covenant is the symbol of the “throne of God,” the place where His glory rested in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:10–22) and God sat “enthroned between the cherubim” (Ps. 80:1, NIV).

The ark going before the people was an encouragement to their faith, for it meant that their God was going before them and opening up the way.

Exodus 33:14 (NKJV) And He said, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

God had promised Moses, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”.

- On that occasion, the presence of the ark was a guarantee of the presence of the Lord.

Joshua's Message To The People

(V. 5)

Joshua 3:5 (NKJV) And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

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Joshua's Message To The People

(V. 5)

- This was both an order and a promise, and the fulfillment of the promise depended on their obedience to the order.
- Some of God's promises are unconditional, and all we have to do is believe them; while other promises require that we meet certain conditions.
- In meeting these conditions, we're not earning God's blessing; we're making sure our hearts are ready for God's blessing.

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- If the experience of Israel at Mt. Sinai was the pattern (Ex. 19:9–15), “sanctify yourselves” meant that everybody bathed and changed their clothes and that the married couples devoted themselves wholly to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:1–6).
- In the Near East, however, water was a luxury that wasn’t used too often for personal hygiene.
- In our modern world we’re accustomed to comfortable bathing facilities; but these were unknown to most of the people in Bible times.

In the Beginning...

- In the Bible the imagery of washing one's body and changing clothes symbolized making a new beginning with the Lord.
- Since sin is pictured as defilement, God has to cleanse us before we can truly follow Him.

Psalm 51:2 (NKJV) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

Psalm 51:7 (NKJV) Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

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In the Beginning...

- When Jacob made a new beginning with the Lord and returned to Bethel, he and his family washed themselves and changed their garments (Gen. 35:1–3).
- After King David confessed his sin, he bathed, changed clothes, and worshiped the Lord (2 Sam. 12:20).

In the Beginning...

- The imagery is carried over into the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 (NKJV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

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16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”

17 Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. **Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.**”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”

1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

- The promise was that the Lord would do wonders among them. As He opened the Red Sea to deliver Israel from Egypt, so also He would open the Jordan River and take them into the Promised Land.
- But that would be just the beginning of miracles, for the Lord would go with them into the land, defeat their enemies, and enable the tribes to claim their inheritance.

Psalm 77:13–14 (NKJV)

13 Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God?

14 You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples.

Daniel 4:3 (NKJV) How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.

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Joshua's Message To The Priests

(V. 6)

Joshua 3:6 (NKJV) Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

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Joshua's Message To The Priests

(V. 6)

- The priests had the responsibility of bearing the ark of the covenant and going before the people as they marched.
- It was the priests who had to get their feet wet before God would open the waters.
- The priests would also have to stand in the middle of the riverbed until all the people had passed over.

Joshua's Message To The Priests

(V. 6)

- When the priests arrived on the other side, the waters would return to their original condition. It took faith and courage for these priests to do their job, but they trusted God and relied on the faithfulness of His Word.

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The Message Of The Lord To Joshua

(vv. 7–8)

Joshua 3:7–8 (NKJV)

7 And the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

8 You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.’ ”

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The Message Of The Lord To Joshua

(vv. 7–8)

- When Moses led the nation through the Red Sea, this miracle magnified Moses before the people; and they recognized that he was indeed the servant of the Lord (Ex. 14:31).
- God would do the same thing for Joshua at the Jordan; and in so doing, He would remind the people that He was with Joshua just as He had been with Moses (Josh. 4:14; see 1:5, 9).

The Message Of The Lord To Joshua

(vv. 7–8)

- Both Moses and Joshua had received their authority from the Lord before these miracles occurred, but the miracles gave them stature before the people. It takes both authority and stature to exercise effective leadership.

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Joshua's Message To The People (vv. 9–13)

Joshua 3:9–13 (NKJV)

9 So Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.”

10 And Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites:

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.

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Joshua's Message To The People (vv. 9–13)

12 Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe.

13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.”

Joshua's Message To The People (vv. 9–13)

- Having instructed the priests bearing the ark, Joshua then shared the words of the Lord with the people. He didn't magnify himself; He magnified the Lord and His gracious blessings to the nation.
- True spiritual leadership focuses the eyes of God's people on the Lord and His greatness.

Joshua's Message To The People (vv. 9–13)

- Much of what Joshua said in this brief speech was recalled from Moses' last speech to Joshua (Deut. 31:1–8), as well as the Lord's words to Joshua when he took Moses' place (Josh. 1:1–9).
- Joshua didn't give the people a "religious pep talk."
- He simply reminded them of the promises of God—the Word of faith—and encouraged them to trust and obey.
- He was standing with faith to move forward.