

GOD WILL MAKE A WAY (part #2)

Joshua 3

Joshua 3: 1-5, 9-17 Last week we studied about what it means to be a crossover Christian. Crossover Christians are those who dare to be different. They dare to accept God's challenge to cross over a difficult and sometimes frightening barrier to conquer great strongholds for God and to gain great glory for God. I love the prayer that the godly old missionary David Brainerd prayed, "O God, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am". Now beloved, that's a crossover prayer if there ever was one. And David Brainerd was truly, 100% a crossover saint. And would to God that every child of God had that same desire in their heart today. "Lord, do a work through me that is so utterly

disproportionate to who I am that You alone can get the glory".

Now, our Scriptural model for being crossover people is the children of Israel as they crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. And last week we looked at three commands that God gave Israel to obey if they were to be successful in crossing over and claiming the good land that He had promised them. Let's review them briefly.

First of all, they were to be **ready**. Ch. 1:10-11 tells us that the officers went through the camp of Israel as they were camped on the east side of the Jordan and said, "Prepare provisions for yourselves, for in three days you will cross over this Jordan". And so they prepared for three days. They got ready for the invasion. And we learned that if we are to cross over into the Promised Land of victories won and the Kingdom's advancement, then we must prepare, just like the truism says, "If you wish to

prosper you must prepare”. And we saw that we prepare by being diligent students of His perfect, powerful Word. And God had told Joshua this very thing just days before their crossing. He told in Joshua 1:8, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”. And so if we are to be crossover Christians and enter into the realm of God’s blessings and power in our lives and in our church, we must first be ready, by living daily in God’s infallible Word.

Secondly, God told Israel to be **resolved**. The officers told the people in Josh. 3:3 that when they saw the Ark of the Covenant move out from the camp toward the Jordan, that they were to go after it. Preparation is not enough. There comes a time when we

must put feet to our preparation; we must draw strength from our Captain and courageously follow Him into battle. The patriots were ready on April 18, 1775, the night that Paul Revere saddled up and made his midnight ride. But what if they all decided that they had rather sleep that night than fight? Who knows if there would have ever been a United States of America? But thank God, they had the resolve to get up, go out and fight. And when you and I see God at work and know that He is calling us to join Him, then we must be resolved to do it! As Henry Blackaby said, that’s when we face a crisis of belief and we must either obey and go on with God or disobey and remain the same.

There’s an old hymn that some of us used to sing that captures this truth: I am resolved no longer to linger, charmed by the world’s delight; things that are higher, things that are nobler, these have allured my sight.” Friends,

I'm here to tell you that there are things that are higher and more noble for you to pursue than all of this world's charms and delights! I was reminded of that just last night. Last night I had dinner with a group of old people. It was at the 45th reunion of my high school graduating class. And I've been growing old with some of those people since the first grade. And I'm telling you, it's been a fast train. It seems just like last week we were playing football on our playground. But this week we're all too worn out for football, so we're playing the football pool on our lunch break at work. And next week we'll be playing dominos on our nursing home patios. And beloved, the charms of this old world are not nearly as charming as they used to be. But the sad part of this is that many Christians don't wake up to this truth until the best years of their lives are over, and when they have little time to lay up treasures in Heaven and make

an impact for Heaven on earth. And they live the rest of their years in sad regret.

What about you? Are you resolved to make a difference for Jesus that is utterly disproportionate to who you are, or are you investing your life in winning the office football pool? The psalmist wrote, "Turn away my eyes from worthless things, and revive me in Your way". Is this the prayer that you need to pray today? Lord, help us to see the higher and nobler things and be resolved to attain them whatever the price!

So God said to His people, "Be **ready**", and "Be **resolved**", but He also said, "Be **right**". Look at Joshua 3:5 (read). Here we see a pattern. God told His people, "Get yourselves right, sanctify yourselves". And the word "sanctify" means to purify yourself, to rid yourself of all known sin. And when they had sanctified themselves, then God said, "I will do wonders among you". Beloved, never, ever minimize the

importance of living a life that is holy before God. The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to pursue holiness, without which no man can see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Isaiah says to God's people in Is. 59:1-2 that the Lord's hand is not short that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear, but that your iniquities have separated you from your God and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. And many believers wonder, where's the power in my life? Where's the joy? And God's says, "It's right here for the getting, but you must first get right".

So God calls us to be ready, to be resolved, and to be right. But to answer these calls we must actually prepare in every area of life. There is some overlap, but when God says "Be ready" He calls us to be prepared mentally. When He says "Be resolved" He calls us to be prepared emotionally. And then He says "Be right", and that's

the call to be prepared spiritually. And Joshua and the children of Israel did get ready, and they were resolved, and they did get right, and now it was time to move out and claim their inheritance. But today I want us to see the marching orders that God gave to them the morning that they broke camp and approached the Jordan River. They were unusual, but it was critical that Israel obey them if they were to be successful in their campaign. Let's begin reading at v. 2-4 to see what they were.

God told His people, "When you see the priests and the Levites bearing the Ark of the Covenant, then you fall in line after them. But notice again v. 4. Yet there shall be a space between you and it. If you're a Bible marker, underline that little word "yet". Friends, they could not follow the call of God just any way, they had to follow it God's way. And God said, "Don't follow directly behind the ark. Keep away a

distance of 2000 cubits”. And that calculates to be about 1000 yards, over a half mile.

But oh, how we can get ourselves in trouble by following God our way and not His! Moses did God’s work his own way when he struck the rock to bring forth water instead of speaking to it like God told him to, and he forfeited his right to enter the Promised Land. Joshua made an unauthorized peace treaty with a heathen people group in Canaan and then Israel was saddled with protecting them from their enemies. Saul offered an unlawful sacrifice to God and God stripped his throne from him. And in every one of these incidences something bad happened because someone did not do God’s work God’s way.

But why do you suppose that God told His people to stay so far behind the ark? Well, first we need to understand that the ark symbolized the presence of God among His people.

So does it not seem strange that they were told to keep their distance from God? Does not the Bible say that Enoch walked with God? Does it not say that Noah walked with God, and does it not say that Moses spoke with God face to face as a man does with his friend? And did not the Lord come down and share a meal with Abraham? Does the NT not say, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you?” And the answer is “yes” to all those questions. Then why did God command His children to keep their distance from Him when they crossed over Jordan?

There were two reasons that God told them not to get too close to Him. First of all it was for their **direction**. Look at the middle of v. 4 again (“....Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before”). You see, beloved, Israel had certainly never walked this road before, and they needed God’s guidance. Why, they had

to be led in the wilderness for forty years by a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire by night because they did know the way to go. And they had no idea how to get over the Jordan River into Canaan. **And they would never know if they were walking too close to Him.** But the question still remains - WHY?

Well, God knew that if His people got too close to the ark they would get their eyes off the ark, quit depending on the ark's guidance, and abandon His leadership and try to make it on their own. It's much like it would be with Marty and his youth if they were out walking together in a large unfamiliar city where they were doing mission work. And some of them would be walking along side Marty or maybe even a few paces ahead of him. And Marty would say to them, "Now, listen, guys. I'm the only one who knows where we're going. So all of you stay behind me so you won't get

lost". And what those youth needed to do was to honor and respect Marty and follow his leadership.

Years ago someone said (Warren Wiersbe, Joshua *in loc*) that God is certainly our companion as we walk though life, but He is not our buddy. And we should never try to get too familiar with God and try to climb up to His level and assume His role as the leader and guide of our lives. Most of you have seen the bumper sticker that says, "God is my co-pilot". To which some holier than thou snooty replies, "If God is your co-pilot you better switch seats". Doesn't that sound so spiritual? "God is my pilot. I'm just the co-pilot". But the truth of the matter is that God does not need nor does He want a copilot. He wants to be in the cockpit all alone. All He wants is that you and I be crewmembers of the aircraft that does whatever He tells us to do. And so God told His people, "Stay behind the ark and let it lead you".

So let me say it again. The way God leads crossover people is a way they've never been before. It is new and it is challenging and it is often frightening. For the children of Israel, it meant crossing over a river that was normally about 100 feet wide, but in the flood season, which was the time of their crossing, it swelled to a width as much as a mile (so Wiersbe). How in the world could two million men, women, and children, plus livestock and all of their belongings cross a river a mile wide with no boats and no bridges? Well, one thing is for sure – they would never do it with conventional wisdom. They had to have God's direction. And so God said, "Stay behind and let me lead".

And beloved, that's what He is saying to us. And don't forget that it is a daily walk we are talking about. It is every day spending time in prayer, every day spending time in His Word. But it's more than a daily walk, it is a

moment by moment walk, being aware of His presence and conversing with Him throughout the day. For John writes that the world lies under the sway of the wicked one, and we need God's guidance to fight against the devil every hour.

But there's another reason God told them to keep their distance from the ark. Not only for His **direction**, but also for His **provision**. Look again at v. 9-11 (read). The land of Canaan was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. And you can believe that the people who lived there loved their land of milk and honey. There were at least seven distinct people groups in Canaan, and Deut. 7:1 tells us that they were greater and mightier than the ragtag army of Israel. And you can be sure that Israel knew they would be the underdogs once the dogfight started. And so God told His people, "I'm giving you a sign that I'm going to defeat your enemies in the Land of Canaan without fail. And

underline the words “without fail”.

There’s no doubt about it, God said.

Why? Because God said that He was the Lord of all the earth. And He said it, not once, but twice.

Look at v. 11. Now look at v. 13.

This verse is very specific. Notice that the two renderings of “Lord” are spelled differently here. The first one, in small capital letters, is the English translation of Jehovah, the God of Israel. The second rendering, in lower case letters, is translated as master, or ruler. And God is saying that He, Who is the personal God of the Israel, is also the master of the whole earth. And friends, the Lord of all the earth has never lost a single battle, not a one, from the time that He expelled Lucifer from Heaven before the foundation of the world. And God told His children that He would give them a sign that He would fight their battles in Canaan for them. And the sign was that the Ark of the Covenant would cross over Jordan

before them. And all that Israel had to do was to stay behind the Ark.

So some of you may be thinking, “OK, pastor, I get it. I’m supposed to stay behind God and let Him fight my battles. That’s great. Now give me some handles”. Well beloved, there is only one. Are you ready? **KNOW GOD.** Peter writes in 2 Peter 1, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**”. You see, beloved, when you really know God you will know God’s great love for you, and Paul writes in Gal. 5:6 that faith works by love. We trust in Him - we let Him fight our battles - because we know that He loves us. So all of this begs the question, “How do you know God?” Would it surprise you if I told you it is the same way we’ve already seen by which Israel got ready to enter the Promised Land? **You know God when you meet Him in His Word.**

Now, there are those who say, “That is so simplistic, so infantile. There’s got to be more to it than that”. Well, no, there is not. When Elisha told Naaman to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River to be healed from his leprosy, Naaman complained that the cure was too simple. But it worked when he did it. And beloved, when you will take the time let the Holy Spirit speak into your spirit the things of God through the supernatural Word of God, then you will come to know God and you will trust God to fight your battles.

And some of you need so desperately to let Jesus fight your battles today. It could be that your marriage is in deep trouble and you’ve been fighting to fix it and you’re losing the battle. Or your teacher or your boss makes your life the closest thing to hell every day, or maybe it’s just the job itself that drags you down. Your battle could be a health issue, or it could be a broken heart over a

wayward child or a broken heart over wayward parents. The world is full of brokenhearted young people and children because of wayward parents, which should break all of our hearts. But whatever the battle is that you are fighting today, as you come to really KNOW GOD, you will trust Him to move out in front of you and fight your battle. You will rest in His promises and your fears will cease, because just like Peter said, grace and peace will be multiplied to you.

Well, I want us to look for a few moments at how completely God gave Israel the victory on the day they crossed over the Jordan River. Look at v. 14-17. Now, let us remember that the Jordan River is at flood stage and it could be as much as a mile wide. It was a scary sight for anyone thinking about fording it to say the least. And the first thing that God did to bring about passage for His people was to provide with courageous, Godly leadership. V.

14 tells us that the priests led the way, carrying the Ark into the Jordan. But what if the priests were like some of the priests that we read of in the OT? Like Aaron, when he led Israel into idol worship at Mt. Sinai. Or like Eli's sons, who robbed God by taking more of the people's sacrifices than the portion that belonged to them. If the priests had not obeyed God when He said to step into the Jordan, none of the people would have stepped in, either.

Beloved, by His grace God has provided for all of us someone who has gone before us and blazed the trail faith that we can follow. Maybe it is your parents. Or if it isn't your parents, maybe it's your grandparents, or a friend's parents, or a pastor or a teacher or a coach, but He has provided someone. Maybe you don't even know them personally, but they've inspired you through their testimony. And God has given them to you so you can follow their leadership

and step out by faith and cross over to your Promised Land. But don't ever forget, God not only says to you, "Follow your leader", He also says, "Be a leader"! For there is someone who needs an example of faith to follow if they ever cross over Jordan to the Promise Land God has given them, and you are the best person that can give it. The preacher is supposed to be a crossover person; he gets paid to live that way. But you don't. You are just like them, and your walk of faith will inspire them more than a preacher ever would.

Now, the moment the soles of the feet of those priests hit the water, did you notice what happened? V. 16 says that the waters of the Jordan rose up in a heap very far away at Adam. And if you do a little geography homework you'll see that Adam was a city that was 45 miles north of Jericho! I had always pictured the children of Israel walking through the Jordan with a huge wall of

water on one side, just like the walls of water they passed through at the Red Sea. But that's not the way it was. We don't know how God did it, but to the north there was a riverbed 45 miles long as dry as any dusty road in Palestine. And to the south it was just as dry with no water in sight for no telling how far downstream. It was God's slam dunk against the barrier that was keeping His people from claiming all of His blessings in the Promised Land. And all Israel rejoiced at the awesome power of Jehovah, and knew that what God did to the Jordan River He could do to any other foe that would come against them.

Beloved, just as surely as you are here this morning, God is calling you to cross over to a new level in your Christian life. To victories and blessings that you've never experienced before. And just as surely He is calling all of us together – His church, Grant's Creek. And what He

did for Israel He will do for you and for me. God **will make a way**. But the question remains, **will you and I obey?**