

ESF, Lord's Day service message
11/29/2015

God's Instructions for a Victorious Life

Joshua 1:5-9

5. No one will be able to stand up 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. 6. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8. Do not let the book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

This text gives us God's instructions for a victorious life.

Following the death of Moses Joshua faced one of the greatest challenges of his life. Although he knew that he was chosen by God to be the next leader, questions flooded his mind and anxiety and fear threatened to crush him: "Can I lead my people to the promised land? How can I fight the enemy of a land with strong fortresses and superior weapons? What if the people disobeyed me as they did to Moses so many times? What if I fail?" These and other questions filled his heart with dread.

At that time, God gave him these instructions to overcome all fears and to be confident of victory.

Victory in God's instructions is rock solid. It is never shaken by circumstances, conditions or man's power. To receive God's promised

victory, we have to follow God's instructions in this text. When we follow these instructions, victory is guaranteed 100%. These instructions are easy to understand, and possible for everybody to follow.

Be strong and courageous

To be victorious, we have to overcome all fears, obstacles, and challenges. Joshua faced many obstacles and challenges. The promised land he was to enter was possessed by strong people, far stronger than he and his people. It was filled with fortified cities. Fighting with them and attempting to break through the fortified cities could mean death.

Many of the people Joshua wanted to lead into the promised land might become terrified when encountering such dangerous obstacles and powerful enemies.

In this situation, God did not give Joshua more weapons, but encouraged him to "*be strong and courageous.*" Notice the number of times God brings this command before Joshua. (v. 6, 7, 9).

By this word, God helped Joshua overcome fear. God also guaranteed Joshua victory not through the power of physical weapons, not through great numbers of soldiers, but through mental strength and courage. God guaranteed Joshua that he would be victorious if he would only be strong and courageous

To be victorious in any kind of battle in our lives, we should be mentally strong and courageous. Mental strength and courage is far more important than any talent or physical and material resources we might have. Even if you have many talents and lots of material resources, you cannot be victorious if you are not mentally strong and courageous. On

the other hand, you can surely be victorious in any circumstance if you are mentally strong and courageous.

God did not say that Joshua should be strong and courageous by his own effort and by his own confidence. God gave him sure ground to be strong and courageous in any situation. It is His word: "*I will be with you. I will never forsake you.*" By knowing that God is with him always, he could always be strong and courageous. By trusting that God is with him, he could be strong and he could overcome all fears and be courageous.

Real victory is not a matter of strength and courage which comes from self-confidence or self-effort, but strength and courage that comes from faith that God is with us.

Do you ever feel like you're facing an uphill battle? Do you feel like the odds are against you? There may be hundreds of times in our lives when we're faced with situations that, to our eyes, seem impossible! There are obstacles like illnesses and disabilities, broken relationships, financial hardships, the loss of a job, etc. Then there's the inner conflicts that test our faith when our personal integrity is attacked: remaining faithful when no one is looking, enduring the sting of loneliness and separation, standing alone when you're misunderstood. There are many times in our lives when we need to hear God's command to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous."

When you have faith that God is with you always, you can be sure that He will give you strength when you need it, you can be sure that in Him you can overcome all obstacles. So you don't need to try to be strong and courageous by your own strength and courage. Just claim the strength and courage in the Lord who is with you.

A little boy came to the Washington monument and noticed a guard standing by it.

'I want to buy it.'

‘How much do you have?’ asked the guard.

“Thirty-five cents’ replied the boy.

You need to understand three things’ the guard explained.

First, thirty-five cents is not enough to purchase the monument, in fact thirty five million dollars is not enough. Second, the Washington Monument is not for sale. And third, if you are an American citizen, you already own it.’

How often do we ask God for blessings that are already ours in Christ. Paul wrote, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places with Christ*” (Eph.1:3).

Be strong and courageous with faith in the Lord who is always with you, who never forsakes you.

Be careful to obey all the law

God instructed Joshua to obey all the law carefully to be victorious.

Notice how the Lord delivers the instruction for victory to Joshua: *Be careful to obey ALL the law*. Here law means God’s word. To be victorious, Joshua should obey not part of the law, but all the law.

God gave them many different kinds of laws while they were traveling in the desert. God gave them the law of the Ten Commandments. God gave them the law of a holy life. God gave them the law of worship. God gave them the law to love each other.

Now they were facing the promised land. They were a new generation and entering a new life in new circumstances. They might have thought that some laws they had received while they were traveling in the desert were not relevant to their new generation, to their new life.

But God firmly commanded Joshua to obey all the law he and his people had received in the desert. Because all the law of God is relevant to all generations and in all circumstances.

Today, some people think that some or all of God's law in the Bible which was written many thousands of years ago cannot be relevant to today's life. So they ignore some of the law or all the law. But they do not understand the truth that God's law lasts forever. Generations change. Man's circumstances change. But all the law of God stands forever. Jesus says: *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away* (Matthew 24:35).

Although generations change, circumstances change, the principle of victory in God's law does not change. To be victorious, we should obey all the law.

How can you obey the law of God?

A. Meditation

Meditating on the law of God is one of the most important spiritual disciplines you can do to be victorious. Deut. 6:6- *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*

Joshua needed extraordinary wisdom and insight to be able to lead his nation in this time of transition, in this time of many wars and battles, in this time of new settlement in new circumstances. To gain extraordinary wisdom and insight, he needed to meditate on the word of God constantly. God told him: *Do not let the book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night,..*

Joshua needed to lead his nation to the promised land. He had to prepare for many wars, and fight many battles. He must have been a very busy man, but he was commanded to make this a priority in his schedule.

We may put off meditating on the word of God in our busy life schedules. But to be victorious, meditating on the word should be priority in our every day lives. Victory cannot come by a one time effort. It comes through the accumulation of small victories in our every day lives. Every day victory comes from every day wisdom and power which we can gain when we meditate in the word of God.

Psalmist testified how he could be wise always in 119:97-100- *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies ...I have more insight than all my teachers for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.* Can you be busier than Joshua? Can you be too busy to meditate on the word? No! If you set your priority to meditate on the word, you can meditate on the word always.

B. Application

After meditating on the word and gaining every day wisdom from the word, we have to apply it to our lives. God told Joshua: *“do everything written in it, then you will be prosperous and successful.* D.L. Moody said, "The Bible was not written for your information, but for your transformation." God's word is not a manual for victory but the only manual for our *sure* victory. When you apply the content of the manual to your own life, victory is 100 % guaranteed.

It would be convenient if we could pick and choose which of God's law to follow and to ignore the laws we think are too demanding and too harsh. But we have to follow not only the commands we like and can understand, but also the commands we don't like and can't understand.

When Joshua faced the enemy and their fortified cities, God gave him a command that he and his people could never understand. When they arrived at the edge of the Jordan river, it was flood season. The river was flooded. Without a bridge or a boat, it was impossible for them to cross over the river. But God led them to the river's edge and told them to step into the water (Joshua 3:8). Was God commanding them to enter the water to swim across the river? Was God telling them to risk drowning by swimming across the flooded river? Why did God not tell them to wait until the flood subsided so they could have time to prepare and figure out what to do to cross over the river?

With their own reasoning, it was impossible for them to understand. But because God told them to obey all the word of God in any situation, they obeyed. Then the waters of the flooded river dived into two and the bottom of the river turned into dry ground for them to cross over. They overcame the obstacle of the flooded river just by obeying the law of God. That was a great success.

After that they had to break through the fortified wall of Jericho. They had no weapons to break the wall. Without breaking through the wall and conquering the city, there was no way to enter into the promised land. It was a great obstacle. Then God told them to march around the wall seven times with the priests blowing with trumpets (Joshua 6:2- 5). God promised that if they did that, the wall would fall down. God did not tell them to prepare some special weapons to break or scale the wall, but to march around the wall. How could the wall fall down by such actions?

Did they understand how the wall would fall down if they did that? No, they did not understand. But Joshua obeyed. He led all his people to obey this command of God. Then what happened? The wall fell down as

God had promised. When they obeyed all the laws of God, whether they liked it or not, whether they understood it or not, nothing but victory followed their obedience. When they obeyed, God enabled them to be victorious.

Many years ago, a man hired an experienced guide to lead him on a hike into the Swiss Alps. After many hours, they came to a high and remote mountain pass. To the man's dismay, he saw the path had almost been washed out. What could he do? To the left was a sheer rock cliff; to his right, a precipice that dropped nearly 1000 ft. and looking down, he felt his head growing faint and his knees beginning to buckle. At that moment his guide shouted, "Do not look down or you are a dead man, keep your eyes on me, and where I put my feet, put yours there as well." The man did as he was instructed and soon he passed from danger to safety.

When we apply God's word into our lives, we may not see the results immediately. But we will see victory sooner or later if we constantly trust in God's promise of victory while we apply the word to our lives.