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THE VICTORY OF FAITH

Reading: Joshua 1:1-9

2. THE REAL THING

Stuart Briscoe once compared the life of the average Christian to an old iron bedstead, “ **Firm on both ends but sagging in the middle.**” That statement has intrigued me, not because it’s catchy but because it describes perfectly many of our Christian lives. We know that we have been saved, firm on that end, we know that when we die we will go to heaven, firm on that end, but is the middle sagging? *We’re on our way to heaven, but are we having a heavenly time getting there?* Well, Joshua is all about *The Victory of Faith*. Spiritually interpreted the exploits of Joshua proclaim the great New Testament truth, “ *This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith.*” (1 Jn 5:24) The book of Joshua is a rather interesting book. In this book *the Land is Promised*, here *the Land is Pursued*, also here *the Land is Possessed*. Sometimes when people read these Old Testament books, they say, “ *What in the world does an old dusty book like Joshua have to do with us to day? Why are we studying a book about battles, about warfare, about a land, about a Jordan River? What does all of this have to do with me living in the 21st century? How will it help me live my life when I go on the job in the morning?* ”

Well, the Bible says that “ *All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable*,” (2 Tim 3:16) Paul says, “ *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.*” (Rom 15:4) God has given us these Old Testament experiences of His people in order to teach us lessons and prepare us to serve the Lord Jesus in this day and age. To the Christian the book of Joshua is a roadmap for spiritual peace, protection, promise and prosperity. You see, Canaan never symbolizes heaven in the Bible. Church hymns may describe that way but the Bible doesn’t. There were still giants in Canaan but there are no giants in heaven. There were still battles to be fought in Canaan, but thank God, there will be no more battles in heaven. There was still sin in Canaan, but there will be none in glory. You see, Canaan was what God redeemed Israel for, just as victory is what God has redeemed us for. He has brought us out that he might bring us in. Therefore, the book of Joshua serves as an instruction manual describing, defining, and detailing how we can live the life of Canaan victory procured by the finished work of Christ.

Ray Steadman put it this way,

You can have all that you are willing to take. You can have every bit of spiritual victory that you want. If you are not satisfied with the degree of your real experience of victory, it is because you haven’t wanted any more.

Now a victorious Christian life is not a superior brand of Christianity reserved for the elite of God’s people. It is the

normal life for every believer. *It isn't bestowed on some because they are spiritual, it is given to all because they are saved.* Too many of us are struggling to win a victory that has already been won. It was won 2,000 years ago. You see, the Christian is a victorious life. Did not the Lord Jesus say, *"I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."* (Jn 10:10) You see, the Christian life can be divided into two stages. *The Red Sea stage and the Jordan River stage with a wilderness in between.* What the cross is to us, the Red Sea was to Israel. It was a symbol of their redemption, their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, but the mighty hand of God. They looked back to the Red Sea as we look back to the Cross, they celebrated the Passover as we celebrate the Lord's Supper. But you see it wasn't enough to get them out of Egypt. Indeed Moses reminded them, *"And He (God) brought us out from hence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore to our fathers."* (Deut 6:23) The purpose of their redemption wasn't realized until they entered the land of Canaan. And to enter the land they had to cross the Jordan River. Then and only then, would the redemptive purpose of God be fulfilled.

Canaan was what God redeemed Israel for, just as victory is what God has saved us for. He brought us out that He might bring us in. Now many believers are out, but they are not in. They are like those spoken of in the first letter to the Corinthians who died in the wilderness without possessing their possessions. (1 Cor 10:5) Now, do you know how the Old Testament describes Canaan ? *"A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness," "a*

land of oil olive and honey," (Deut 8:9) *"A land flowing with milk and honey,"* (Num 13:27) *"A land which the Lord thy God careth for."* (Deut 11:12) Do you know how the New Testament describes our Canaan ? *"Peace which passeth all understanding,"* (Phil 4:7) *"Joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Pet 1:8) *"Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Eph 1:3) *"More than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Rom 8:37) God brought us out that He might bring us in. Are you in ? Are you enjoying all that God has procured for you through Christ ? These opening verses of the book of Joshua tell us some important things about God and Israel.

(1) THE GOAL GOD HAD FOR ISRAEL

Liberty from bondage was not all of God's goal for His people. Rather God took them out of Egypt that He might bring them into their own land, the land He had promised them. Do you recall that generations before that the Lord had made a promise to Abraham ? Look at it (Gen 13:14-15) My ... freedom from Egypt was only the first step. Until they occupied Canaan they would not experience God's complete rescue operation. Similarly, God's goal, in saving us it not only to get us out of hell and into heaven. God's objective is for us to experience all that God has for us in Christ. Listen to what Paul says to the Roman believers, *"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

(Rom 8:29) Do you recall what he wrote to the Ephesians ? “ *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* ” (1:4) He says to the Corinthian believers, “ *Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.* ” (2 Cor 2:14) But wait a minute. Does living in victory mean we no longer sin ? Not at all, but it does mean that we learn to depend on Christ for every aspect of our life. We live in His strength not our own, we serve His desires not our own, we live for His glory not our own. And when we sin instead of plunging ourselves into despair and guilt, we trust His cleansing blood to wash it away and restore us to that sweet fellowship. We become supersensitive to sin, and when the Holy Spirit convicts us, we immediately deal with it. Now the best way to define God’s goal for Israel which was victory is to describe it, so let’s examine some of its ingredients.

(a) We Appropriately the Promises of God:

The promises of the Bible become experiential instead of merely theological. Now God’s promise to Joshua was definite. The Lord told the Israelites the land was theirs. (1:2) They needed only to act. Act with strength, courage and obedience. Someone may say, “ *Well, I’ve done that already. I accept every word in the Bible as the true, inspired Word of God.* ” My I am sure that you do, but that’s not what I mean. I mean you should accept God’s promises for yourself, as though you were the first and only person to whom ever God spoke them. Now look at these promises God made to Joshua and notice that,

1. God’s Promises are not Limited to Past Saints:

Did you notice the Lord’s commission to Joshua ? God tells Joshua that the promises He made to Moses were now promises to him. Look if you will at (1:5-6) You see, the promises didn’t die with Moses. God renews them with every generation. Now we might be tempted to think and say, “ *That’s all very well for Joshua, but it cannot apply to us, can it ?* ” Yes it can. Look if you will at (Heb 13:5-6) Do you see the words ? “ *He hath said.* ” Now where in Scripture did God say that ? Why, the reference is to (1:5) But do you see what the writer to the Hebrews is doing ? He is taking the promise that God gave to Joshua and applying it to New Testament believers. For he goes on to say, “ *So that we may boldly say the Lord is my helper.* ” Here is an absolutely clear cut situation that we can take this word in (1:5) and apply it to our situation. God says to Joshua “ *As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee, I will not fail thee not forsake thee.* ” (1:5) And the writer to the Hebrews says that the promise God gave to Joshua is ours also. “ *So that we may boldly say the Lord is my helper.* ” Is this not wonderful ?

We can put ourselves in Joshua’s shoes. Now we are not the same stature that Joshua was, we are pigmy sized compared with him, but that does not matter for he was pigmy sized compared with Moses. Do you see what God says concerning Moses in (Deut 34:10) But God says, “ *As I was with Moses so I will be with thee* ” And God says to us, “ *As I was with Joshua so I will be with thee.* ” Now is the way you look at the promises of God ?

God promised them to me, not just to Joshua, Paul, or Peter or the early church. “ *All the promises of God in him are yea and in him Amen unto the glory of God by us.*” (2 Cor 1:20) 1.

2. God’s Promises are not Altered by Time:

Joshua was standing at the end of forty years of failure and unbelief. Think of it. An entire generation had died since the Lord had made this promise. (Deut 6:23) But the years had failed to erode the promises of God. The Psalmist says, “ *Forever O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven, thy faithfulness is unto all generations.*” (119:89-90) My don’t let a mere 2,000 years separate you from the promises of God.

3. God’s Promises are not Affected by Circumstances:

Like a clap of thunder, the Lord announced, “ Moses my servant is dead.” (1:2) Exit Moses, faithful and familiar leader, a man with a face to face relationship with God, a trusted friend who stuck with them through every bad time. Enter Joshua, a new recruit. My if the mighty Moses was unable to bring them into Canaan, who could ? Surely Joshua could not succeed where Moses failed. You see, this was not an encouraging situation. But the Lord had made it clear that circumstances had not changed His plans. How could they ? He had created the circumstances. God planned Moses death, brought it about, and was in charge of the funeral service Himself. (Deut 34:5-6) Rest assured that God will never create a circumstance that conflicts with His plans, regardless of

how it happens. Every circumstance under the control of our sovereign Lord only serves to further His purposes. Now I don’t know about you but the quickest route to defeat for me to concentrate on my circumstances. But you see, victory does not depend on circumstances. Even if everyone about us fails, God is still faithful. Each adverse circumstances is a fresh call to believe God, and each difficulty is a new opportunity for God to demonstrate His faithfulness. Yes, God’s goal for Israel and us is victory and this means (a)

(b) We Experience the Presence of God:

For time and again in this chapter God said to Joshua, “ *I will be with thee,*” (1:5, 9, 17) What a moment this was. Joshua was to lead Israel into the land and he needed all the guidance, wisdom, courage, tenacity, determination and every other quality that could be mustered for this enormous task. But then God says, “ *I am with you.*” His sufficiency is in God. What an encouragement. God is with me. My He is with you. He who wrought wonders in Egypt, who opened the Red Sea and brought the Israelites out of Egypt, this mighty God is with you. Do you need His grace just now ? He is the fountain of grace. Do you need strength in the face of fierce temptation ? He is there to give you that strength. Do you need love for someone who has been anything but loving toward you ? God is love. Do you need purity in the midst of an unclean world ? God is holy and He is with you right now. I came across a quote by R.W. Dale the famous preacher of Birmingham in which he said some years ago.

“ Christ is as real to me as the chair on this platform.”

Wouldn't it be great to say that and mean it ? Is Christ that real to you ? (a) (b)

(c) We Utilise the Power of God:

Look if you will at (1:5) The Lord was saying, “ *Joshua I'm going to make you invincible.*” You see, the Lord was telling Joshua that no man could prevent Israel from reaching their God appointed goal. Joshua would have the power to do everything God asked him to do. Do you recall when the twelve spies went into the land of Canaan ? They cowered like grasshoppers before the giants of Canaan. But Joshua and Caleb standing on the promises of God said, “ *they are bread for us, the Lord is with us fear them not.*” (Num 14:9) A generation later as Israel acted in God's power, they found him spreading a banquet table for them. My God's power gives us victory over the giants around us and over the giants in us. (c) But what kind of power is this ?

1. RESURRECTION POWER:

Do you recall Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers ? (Eph 1:18-20) Think of it. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is made available to us. Are you facing a problem ? Which is easier ? *Solving that problem or raising a dead man from the grave ?* The answer is obvious. My if God raise someone from the grave, is there anything that He cannot do ? You have resurrection power residing in you. But not only 1.

2. REIGNING POWER:

For Paul says, “ *They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*” (Rom 5:17) God has made kings out of slaves and princes out of paupers. But notice the words are we shall “ *reign in life,*” not in heaven. He's not talking about the “ *sweet bye and bye,*” but the “ *nasty here and now.*” So this is Resurrection Power, Reigning Power.

3. RELEASED POWER:

For Paul says, “ *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working (power) which worketh in me mightily.*” (Col 1:29) What does the life of victory mean ? That I no longer labour according to my strength but according to His. My ability is no longer measured by my power but by His. Isn't it wonderful to know that we can do anything and everything God wants us to do ? (1)

(2) THE GIFT GOD GAVE TO ISRAEL

Actually God gave Israel a two fold gift. There was the gift of,

(a) A NEW LEADER:

“ *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise go over this Jordan,*” (1:2) Abraham Lincoln was once asked about his ambitions as a political leader and he replied,

“ *I will prepare myself and be ready and perhaps my chance will come.*” Joshua’s hour had come. He had ministered faithfully as the servant of Moses, but you see God was using those years of service as preparation for this hour. There is an unchanging principle that runs throughout the Scriptures and it is this. ***Faithfulness in little things is always God’s appointed way to bigger things.*** The Lord said, “ *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things I will make thee ruler over many things.*” (Matt 25:21) God’s pattern is always this. He makes us servants before He makes us rulers. You have to be willing to serve before you can be qualified to lead. The path of loyalty is the path that leads to royalty. “ *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise,*” I am told that when the news came across the radio of the death of our present Queen’s father, King George the sixth there was a national sense of mourning, as if it was a personal bereavement. Can you imagine the sense of foreboding that would have come upon the children of Israel ? Yet the death of Moses was not going to be allowed to be a paralysis on the people. Does there not seem to be a challenge in (1:2) ? I wonder if the people were about to sit down and mope ? Could it be that they would have become inactive, perhaps dispirited ? God uses good psychology as He prods Joshua into activity. “ *Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan.*”

A New Leader. Changes do come in the work of God, and oft-times we resent change. All of us know what it is to lean on trusted servants, and almost to conclude that the work of God cannot proceed without them. But my not one of us is indispensable. God buries his workmen,

but His work goes on, and the best way to show our respect for our former leaders is to carry on where they left off. So God says to Joshua “ *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise,*” you see, the good news was that though Moses was dead, God was not dead. I suppose there were some in Israel who were saying, “ *Well this is not Moses, this is Joshua.*” (a)

(b) A NEW LAND:

1. Look at the Geographical Significance of all this:

For centuries nations have questioned Israel’s right to the land which God was about to give them. But no-one can question God’s right to give Canaan to Israel for He owns all the lands of the earth. Do you recall the words of the psalmist ? “ *The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.*” (Ps 24:1) Look at the geographical boundaries of this land. On the West: the Mediterranean seacoast, on the East: the Euphrates River, far to the east, on the South: the wilderness over to the Nile of Egypt, on the North: Lebanon. Now the territory actually conquered and possessed in the time of Joshua was much less than what had been promised. Even in the time of David and Solomon when the land had reached its greatest extent, the outlying districts of what had been promised were within Israel’s sphere of influence but now under its rule. *When will Israel fully possess the land ?* In November of 1947, 56 delegates to the United Nations met in Flushing, New York, to decide the future of Israel. As the delegate of Guatemala rose to cast the first vote a piercing cry

came from the gallery, a Hebrew cry as old as the suffering of that people. The cry was this, “ **O Lord save us.**” The results of the vote were 33 for, 10 against, and 13 abstaining. Jews danced in the streets of New York, London and Tel Aviv. But Palestine was still a divided land and Jerusalem a divided city. Not until 1967 was Israel able to expand her territory and unify the city of Jerusalem. But she is far from occupying all that was promised to Abraham (Gen 13:14, 15:18) to Isaac (Gen 26:3) to Jacob (Gen 28:19 35:12) as an eternal possession. “ *For all the land which thou seeest to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever.* ” (Gen 13:15) Today, world pressures are being directed to force Israel to return much of her conquered land to Arab peoples. I don't care how it may change back and forth. There is one thing sure. God will keep His word. When all is said and done that land is going to belong to Israel. 1.

2. Look at the Spiritual Significance of all this:

For we have a land to claim also. The land of victory in Christ. You see, victory is not only God's goal for the believer, it is also God's gift to the believer. “ *Every place that have I given unto you,* ” (1:3) Did you notice the tense? “ *I have given,* ” not “ *I will give.* ” It was already theirs. God had given the land with all its riches to His people before they even saw what it was like. This means for us as Christians, that

- **Victory is Assured:**

There is no reason why we cannot live a life of victory because it's not attained by striving and struggling. It's part of your birthright as a child of God. You don't have to make peace with failure or come to terms with defeat. The victory of Christ is ours for the taking. Now sometimes we're slow to believe it, even slower than unbelievers. Look if you will at (2:9-11) My the enemy knew they had lost before the Israelites knew they had won. They had more faith in the power of God than God's people. But victory is assured.

- **Victory is Accomplished:**

Before Joshua led them into Canaan God said to him, “ *I have given it to you.* ” Do you know something? Every step that Joshua took was on conquered ground. Is this not what the life of victory is all about? Walking on conquered ground. You see, some believers and they are vibrant, they have joy and victory. Look at others, and there is constant defeat and unrest and they never seem to enter into the blessings which are theirs. I heard about a fellow who went on a cruise. On that cruise he took along some peanut butter crackers. At meal time while everybody else went somewhere else he would get in his cabin and eat one or two of those peanut butter crackers. *He didn't have many so he had to ration them out.* They got smaller and smaller. Toward the end of the week's cruise he didn't have many peanut butter crackers left and he was getting hungry. He expressed his hunger to another passenger and the passenger said, “ *what are you doing eating peanut butter crackers. Didn't you realize that the meals in the dining room were included in the price of*

the ticket ?” Christ has provided victory for us in Him but you have to claim it. Peter says, “ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” (2 Pet 1:3) He is saying that everything that is necessary for you to live a holy, victorious life has been given to you. It’s in the ticket of salvation but you have to claim it. (1) (2)

(3) THE GROWTH GOD SOUGHT FROM ISRAEL

Canaan was *a gift* to Israel but Canaan had to be *gained* by Israel. God told Joshua He had already given them the land, but they would have to possess it, and that would require strength and courage. While the gift was absolute it had to be appropriated. Do you recall the Lord’s words ? (Matt 11:28-29) Well, which is it ? *Does Christ give rest or do we find rest ?* Both, by coming to Christ we receive rest, but there is a second rest, that we find when we take His yoke and learn of Him. *Rest is given, but rest must be gained. There is God’s side of giving and man’s side of gaining.* How do we gain it ? What is our part ? How we do take our Canaan ? Well, at these opening verses and notice,

(a) VICTORY IS GAINED BY FAITH:

Joshua was to take God at His Word and start walking. Is this not what faith is ? Acting on the Word of God. We don’t go out to victory, we go out from victory. The Christian life is lived from a platform of victory already accomplished. How do you face each day ? Like this.

“ Lord, I thank you that each problem I meet today has already been overcome by you. Every temptation I confront to day has already been put down by you.” You seem if we meet the day hoping to remain strong and true, determined to do our best for Christ we’ll fail. Victory is not your doing your best for Christ, its Christ doing His best for you. You have no victories to win, Christ won them all, rely on Him.

(b) VICTORY IS GAINED BY FOLLOWING:

Look if you will at (1:7) God was telling Joshua that success in the forthcoming venture depended on him. You say, *“ I thought it depended on the Lord.”* It does, but the Lord can give us that success only as we follow His instructions. As I understand it, when Joshua was about to lead the people into the Promised Land, the only Words of God he had were Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Old Testament. God said to Joshua *“ This is your military manual. This will be your map. This is how you will accomplish the job I have given you.”* Did you notice what God told him to do with *“ the law,”*? He was to,

1. Meditate on it Continually:

Look if you will at (1:8) John Bunyan wrote on the flyleaf of his Bible, this phrase, *“ This book will keep you from sin, sin will keep you from this book.”* Can you not testify that to that fact ? When you get away from the Lord, the last thing you want to do is read the Word. My it’s impossible to have victory in the Christian life

apart from the Word of God. Is the Word central in your life ?

2. Read it Obediently:

“ *That thou mayest observe to do*,” (1:8) It means read with the purpose of obeying. “ *Joshua read the Word with this in mind. Not that you might become more educated about the Law, but that you might become obedient to the Law.*”

3. Follow it Exclusively:

“ *Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left,*” (1:7) Don't go this way. Don't go that way. Whatever it says you do it.

4. Accept it Totally:

“ *That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.*” (1:8) Do you see that phrase ? “ *All that is written therein.*” Does that include the Old Testament ? Some folk ask, “ *Why teach from the Old Testament, when most teach from the New Testament ?*” Is the Old Testament part of Scripture ? Does its narrative help illustrate New Testament truth ? My (a) (b)

(c) *VICTORY IS GAINED BY FIGHTING:*

When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt he could have taken them by a direct way into Canaan, instead He led them by a roundabout route. Do you know why ? They

weren't ready to fight. (Ex 13:17) So God postponed military operations until they were ready. *Do you want to enter your land of Canaan ? Do you want to experience and enjoy the life of victory for which Christ died ?* Then you are in for a fight. You say, does that not contradict the fact that victory is not won by our struggling ? My although we must fight, we fight in the power of the Lord, we are to be strong in the Lord, and put on the whole armour of God. Have you discovered at times it's easy to pray and praise and read, at other times it's an intense struggle ? We always want to read the Bible with ease but sometimes only discipline makes it possible. Joshua's first victory was an easy one. But the other victories were not that way. There was conflict and confrontation. ***The land was theirs by Divine Gift, but it had to be gained by Human Endeavour.***

Let me give that quote that we began with, “ **The average Christian is like an old iron bedstead, firm on both ends but sagging in the middle.**” Is that you ?

