

Joshua 1

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, obedience, and holiness in the path and service of God, and highlights the promise of God's presence and power with us in the divine wars.

Scripture: Joshua 1:9, Psalm 1:2, Romans 8:31, 2 Corinthians 1:11, Ephesians 2:6, Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 3:3, 2 Timothy 1:7, Hebrews 11:1, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the significance of the Book of Joshua, emphasizing that the journey into Canaan represents the Christian's spiritual conflict after redemption. He highlights that, despite entering the promised land, Israel faced battles, symbolizing the ongoing spiritual warfare Christians encounter after accepting Christ. Darby explains that true victory comes through faith, obedience to God's word, and reliance on His strength, as believers are called to actively possess the blessings of Christ. He encourages the faithful to meditate on Scripture and to be strong and courageous in their walk with God, assuring them of His presence in their struggles. Ultimately, the sermon underscores the importance of community and mutual support in the Christian journey.

Transcript

In the Book of Joshua we read the history of the taking possession of the land of Canaan, so far as that was carried out; as in the Book of Numbers we follow the same people in their toilsome journey through the wilderness: a journey more toilsome through their own unbelief, but in which a faithful and compassionate God accompanied them all the way, and led them, though by a path of chastening, when they would not go up at once by the path of faith. Their clothes waxed not old, nor did their feet swell, those forty years.

Both these parts of their history, remark, were after their redemption out of Egypt.

I would trace just now the principles on which the path and service of faith, as represented by the history of Joshua, can be securely and successfully trod.

Let my reader remark - what perhaps he has never noticed - that the conflicts which are recorded in the Book of Joshua are not only after redemption out of Egypt but after crossing the Jordan. Now Jordan is generally taken for a figure of death, and Canaan of heaven; and I do not doubt justly. But how comes it that all is fighting after it, and that the man who appears to Joshua comes as captain of Jehovah's host?

War characterizes Israel's state after entering into Canaan; their journey but through the wilderness. This remarkable feature in the history of those events, which "happened unto them for ensamples [types], and are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are [to] come," calls us to enquire what the connection of these events is, and how the passage through death and entrance into heaven leads to a state of conflict and war.

The New Testament makes very plain what is the solution of this apparent difficulty. It teaches not only that Christ is dead and risen again for us, but that we have, in God's sight as united to Him by the Spirit, died and risen with Him. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," Col. 3:3. He hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, Eph. 2. Thus the Christian himself is viewed as having himself passed through death and being risen again, because Christ who is his life has. "If ye be dead with Christ," says Paul (Col. 2). "If ye then be risen with Christ," Col. 3. In this sense we are viewed as having passed through Jordan. We have died, and are risen, and are entered into the heavenly places. Hence we have our conflicts there; for the Canaanite and the Perizzite are yet in the land. So Paul says, "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, with powers, with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." He is here referring to Joshua and Israel, who had to contend with flesh and blood - we with spiritual enemies. Thus the Christian is looked at as having died and risen in Christ, and called upon to possess the land - to realize the blessings given by the power of the Holy Ghost, whether apprehending and enjoying the unsearchable riches of Christ, or rescuing from the power of Satan those who are led captive by him.

311 Before I turn to the practical principles I have referred to, let me draw my reader's attention to the effect of having thus passed the Jordan.

First, there is, and thus only, the death of the flesh, entire death to the world. Israel was not circumcised in the wilderness: Israel was now circumcised, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away. To this, as the place of self-judgment, Israel returned after all their victories. But there was another point: they ate of the old corn of the land, and the manna ceased. The manna is Christ as come down and humbled - Christ for the need of the wilderness. The old corn belongs to the heavenly land - Christ in His heavenly glory. This is all ours before any combat - before a wall has fallen or an enemy is conquered. We possess all the heavenly blessing by a divine title. Then, "the man with the drawn sword" - Christ in spirit - comes to lead us to conflict, but to victory if we walk under His leading.

This leads us to the principles on which victory is to be obtained in the conflict in which we are engaged. All is promised from the river Euphrates to the great sea. But then comes the question of taking possession. We must actively take possession of it to enjoy it. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Nothing can be simpler. You have only to take possession. But this you must do. So with us. Large possessions are before us. All the unsearchable riches of Christ are ours. But there must be the diligent occupation of the heart with these things in order to possess them. Let the reader be assured that there is a large and rich field before him, all that God has given him in Christ to delight in; and he has received the divine nature (for I speak of saints) to delight in these things.

312 But here conflict comes in, because these spiritual enemies would hinder us from realizing, in a pure and undistracted heart, what Jesus calls our own things; as the things of this world he calls another's. But these conflicts, though useful for exercise and the experience of God's faithfulness, are no hindrance to our taking possession; but, while testing our own state, only shew how God is with us. Were the failing of the walls of Jericho and the victories of Joshua a hindrance No.

Holiness and looking to God, in a word, separation of heart to God, are required when the captain of Jehovah's host came up to meet Joshua. He was to take his shoes off as much as Moses before God in "the bush." The Lord in our midst for conflicts is as holy in nature as the Lord in redemption. Hence, as is known, when there was an Achan in the camp God would not go out with them. But, when there is uprightness of heart, the word is this: "There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." What a comfort and strength is this! No difficulty in anything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" I cannot think of, or meet with, a difficulty which for a moment stops my course. I have to be careful for nothing, and, making my requests known to God, in the midst of conflict, God's peace keeps my heart. And this never fails. "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Not only God does not forsake us, but He does not fail us in the strength, grace, wisdom, needed so as to give firmness and power. In nothing does He fail us. He is always with us, and with us for, and in, the conflict. The Lord will make war with Amalek; but it is in Israel, but God's war. Thus divine strength and power with us, in faithful goodness, is the first and blessed groundwork for our hearts in the conflict.

It leads to another principle: confiding faith, courage. Be strong and of good courage." God calls us to confidence and strength of heart in His strength, for we shall succeed in the work He has given us. This too is blessing. Take courage, for you shall do the work. Why not, if the work be His and He be with us?

But this has a special bearing worthy of all note. You shall divide the land - "only be thou strong and very courageous no drawing back, no being terrified, shrinking before the power of the enemy. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." Satan is there, but if there we have a free courage, God is there, witness of ruin to Satan's instruments, of sure salvation to those who have God with them. There is no question (if we are grasshoppers, and our enemies giants, and the walls up to heaven), if God be there. Of what consequence was the height of a wall, if it fell at the blast of a ram's horn? What matter that the sea is rough, if Christ is there to make us walk on it? What good its being smooth, if He be not?

313 Now mark what courage is shewn in, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all that my servant Moses commanded thee!" We need courage to obey. It seems folly. The world is against us. There seems no sense, often, in the prescriptions of the word of God. Our own fleshly ease is interested in not being so particular. The path is different from all the world. It supposes a living God, who acts and notices all things, to whom we belong and whose will is everything to us. Of this the world knows nothing, To do God's will and simply obey His word requires courage in the face of the world, courage with our own hearts. To this we are called. "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all that Jehovah has commanded us." It is the courage of faith which looks to God. This is the way of prospering in the conflict. God's strength is employed in helping us in the path of God's will, not out of it. Then no matter where we go, what the difficulties, how long the journey seems, He makes our way prosperous: Whithersoever thou goest."

This leads to another and natural consequence, but one of great importance, because it not only informs us of the will of God, but keeps us in His presence, and familiar with the ideas, thoughts, ways, hopes, the whole manner of our God. "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 all that is written therein, for thus shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success." Compare Psalm 1. This meditation on God's word, of course, makes us know His will. But it does a great deal more. It gives the habitual delight of the heart to be in what God reveals, in what He delights in. We acquire His (that is, the true but divine) way of thinking of things; not the side of the vain show of this world. Our own hearts are formed by and in this

divine and blessed apprehension of things. Oh what a light it is, and how does the vanity of this world appear what it is! "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Besides, the soul is kept subject to God in meditating on His word: an immense point morally. Nor is this all. It secures the communications of His grace. "I have called you friends, for whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Owning the word of God is owning God in this world as He has spoken. But I must pass on.

314 The next ground Jehovah gives is, "Have not I commanded thee?" Nothing gives greater confidence than this. "We ought to obey God," says Peter. If I am even going right, but do not surely know that I am doing God's will, the least difficulty casts all into doubt, and all my courage is destroyed. When I know that I am doing God's will, difficulties are no matter, I meet them on the road. But for obedience to God's will, God's power is there; and the heart, knowing that it is doing God's will, has no distrust. Uprightness would fear if it might be self, but uprightness fears nothing, hesitates in nothing, when it knows it is doing God's will. It can appeal to any one if that ought not to be done. "Have not I commanded thee; be strong and of a good courage." And then we have therewith the positive assurance, "Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

A further principle is brought out in the case of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. It is given to us in these divine wars to combat for others. This is an immense privilege. I have to combat to possess more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, to realize more of His life and of the knowledge of Him, to have the vineyards as well as the oliveyards of Canaan, and the old corn of the land; in a word, to possess what is given me in Christ. But it is given to us to combat in every way for God's people also. Paul (2 Cor. 1:11) was dependent on the poor praying saints, it might be on some poor bed-ridden widow, for the gifts by which he carried on his active warfare in the Lord's field. He himself was labouring unceasingly, both in prayer and the ministry of the word, to put God's people in possession of their privileges. This is an immense privilege. Not only are we saved, blessed, made partakers of glory, joy in God; but God is pleased to make us partners, co-workers under Him in His own divine privilege of love and blessing. This is grace indeed! Surely we must know it, as its objects, to witness it; but God's love in us flows forth in love to make it known to others.

315 Note another thing. If we are doing God's will and work we may reckon on Him for all that is dear to us, and in which we are interested. We could not keep it without God were present. He can keep it without us if we are doing His will and service in love. The two and a half tribes could leave their little ones and all that they had behind, to go armed to the war to help their brethren. No doubt, no fear, no hesitation! Such is the path of faith. It counts on God in the path of obedience to His known will. He has divine wisdom for every step, and divine power. Both are in Christ. We cannot know wisdom perfectly, nor see the end or the bearing of many things; but He who gave us the word did, and we are guided in the word according to that perfect knowledge.

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