

As I was with Moses,so I will be with You

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- [0 : 0 0] Joshua chapter 1, we read in the verses 5 and 9. I shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life as I was with Moses.
- So I will be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. In verse 9, have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage.
- Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. The context of these words which the Lord speaks to Joshua is a time of bereavement.
- And not just any bereavement. But aside from Joshua himself and Cael of the son of Jephunneh, a bereavement such as none of the adult population of Israel would ever have experienced up to that point.
- As most of you perhaps will remember those who had declined to enter the promised land when the spies brought back the ill report.
- [1 : 1 5] And all of them, 10 out of the 12 said, No, we can't go in. We can't possess it. And only Joshua and Cael of said, Yes, it's a good land. Let's go forward into it.
- The Lord will be with us. And because the people would not have it, the Lord said, Then they shall not have it. And all those who would not enter in and who feared for the safety of their little ones, their carcasses would fall in the wilderness.
- But their children would grow up during the 40 years wandering in the wilderness. So they would stand to inherit. So of all those adults now that stood on the threshold of entering the promised land, there was not one save Joshua and Caleb who were left alive, who could remember a time when Moses hadn't led them.
- There weren't any who could remember a time when he hadn't been the one to whom they looked for leadership and guidance. And yes, they had their arguments with them. And yes, they had their murmurings and their complaints.
- But all those Moses had been there. And when Moses went into the tabernacle, then the pillar of cloud descended, and the pillar of fire led them by night. And they'd never had a time when they didn't have Moses.
- [2 : 3 3] All of those who had come out of Egypt, the entire population, had never known a time when Moses wasn't there to help, to lead, and to guide them.
- This wasn't just a bereavement. This would be such for them as would cause them to feel, what on earth do we do now? Where on earth can we look?
- We've always looked to Moses. We're not that great in terms of our relationship with the Lord ourselves. But he was. The Lord knew him and spoke to him face to face. He was the one we looked to.
- He was the one who brought the Ten Commandments back down the mountain. He was the one that gave us the instructions about the tabernacle. He was the one who walked with God. He was the one we looked to. We knew that if he said it, we could trust it because of his relationship with the Lord.

And now he's gone. What do we do? It is a time of bereavement such as they would never have known before. Not just a time of bereavement, but if we think of Joshua to whom these words are addressed, this must have been a time also of intense, unspeakable, personal grief.

[3 : 46] Remember that Joshua had been the personal minister, oblique servant, the hand servant of Moses for all of these 40 years.

We first encounter Joshua in chapter 17 of the Exodus. Chapter 17 of Exodus where we read suddenly out of the blue in verse 9, Moses said unto Joshua, choose us out men and go out and fight with Amalek tomorrow.

I will stand on the top of the hill with the Lord of God in my hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him and fought with Amalek and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Now verse 13, and Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Now we read a little further on, you know, that Joshua was a young man. In chapter 33 of Exodus, we read at verse 11, the Lord spake unto Moses face to face.

He turned again into the camp but his servant Joshua, the son of man, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. Now we don't know what exactly they mean by a young man.

[4 : 54] How long is a piece of string? How young is a young man? He could have been in his twenties. He could have been 30-ish by then. We don't know exactly. If he is going to have sufficient authority to lead the armies of Israel against Amalek, then perhaps he must be at least 30.

But everything suggests that Joshua, who suddenly appears on the stage there in Exodus 17, is not deriving his authority from any military prowess or any knowledge.

Remember, these people had all been slaves in Egypt. They didn't have great military experience. They weren't professional soldiers. Joshua would be no different. He would be a young man when he comes out of Egypt, either in his twenties or just about 30.

He's not a military genius. Why are the people all ready to listen to him? Because he is recognized to be delegated directly from Moses. They will listen to him.

They will obey his military commands because he speaks with Moses' mouth. Because he has Moses' authority behind him. He's like the ambassador in any other country of the world where you know that when you're dealing with the ambassador, you're dealing with that country, with their official representative.

[6 : 08] When you stand in the embassy, you're standing on the soil of that sovereign country, even though it's in a different country's land. So Joshua derives his authority from the fact that he is Moses' right-hand man, despite his youth, despite his inexperience.

And he is constantly there at Moses' side as his servant. When they go up the mountain, again, back up to Mount Sinai, and God says to Moses, chapter 24 of Exodus, Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and 70 of the elders of Israel, and worship thee afar off.

And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him. So in other words, Aaron and Nadab and Abihu, they don't get to go right up to the top of the mountain.

They only go up so far. Moses said, Moses alone, verse 2 of Exodus 24, shall go up. And then, when we read a little further on, we see in verse 12, The Lord said unto Moses, Come up unto me into the mountain, and be there, and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, which I have written, and that thou mayest teach them.

And Moses rose up, and his minister, and his servant, Joshua, and went up into the mountain of God. But wait a minute, God had sent Moses alone. How come Joshua is able to go with them?

[7 : 30] How come Joshua gets to go up into the mountain too? Well, the only possible, reasonable explanation for this is that whilst Aaron, and Nadab, and Abihu, and the future priests, and so on, they are almost as if we're men in their own right.

Joshua is only there as the servant of Moses. It's almost like, as Moses' personal son, he doesn't count. He doesn't count as a sort of man, and so Moses is still regarded as being there alone with the Lord, even though Joshua is actually there with him.

As a servant, he becomes almost invisible. He almost, as it were, disappears as Moses' right-hand man. And he's up there with them all the 40 days and 40 nights, and then when they're coming down from the mountain, of course, and Joshua says to him, Joshua heard the noise of the people.

This is when they're all dancing and singing around the golden calf. And he says to him, as they're coming down the mountain, there is a noise of war in the calf. And Moses said, it's not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

And then, of course, you've got the confrontation and the burning of the golden calf, and then they set up the tent, the initial little tabernacle, the rough and ready one. Moses goes into it. Joshua's there with them.

[8 : 48] And when Moses turns back into the calf, this is Exodus 33, 11, his servant Joshua, the son of man, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

He stayed. He stayed soaking up the presence of the Lord. It was clear, even from that stage, that the Lord was setting apart Joshua for this particular work, this special work.

Even though he was so comparatively young, even though perhaps he was inexperienced, the Lord was giving Moses all these things. He was giving him the extra, the replacement set of the Ten Commandments, and the Lord specifically says that he was to teach them to Joshua as well so that he would have the ability to teach others.

And we read at the end of Deuteronomy, verse 34, verse 9, Joshua, the son of man, was full of the spirit of wisdom. For Moses had laid his hands upon him, and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

He is full of the spirit of wisdom. We'll come back to that in a minute. The point I want us to recognize is that it is not possible to have walked and lived and imbibed so much, so closely, so personally, intensely, with this one great leader, Moses, as Joshua did, living side by side with him, soaking up his teaching, his leadership skills, his abilities, serving him, waiting on him hand and foot, being there, the invisible background presence when he's up the mountain, and not have so much of your heart, your life, your very soul, invested in this beloved leader.

[10 : 36] But when he is taken away, how must Joshua have himself felt? We think in terms of, oh, well, that's it, Moses is done, now Joshua on into the promised land.

Think of him, he is flesh and blood. He is a man who must surely have been unmanned by his grief. We read at the end of Deuteronomy 34, verse 8, the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab 30 days.

So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. I suggest that for Joshua 30 days was nothing. It wasn't enough. He was unmanned. He would have been a sense of helplessness.

What do I do now for 40 years? I've been second in command to this man. I've been his lieutenant. I've been his right-hand man. I've been his servant. I've always been there in the back yard.

He's always told me what to do. I've always been there with him and for him. Now what do I do? He must have felt like he'd suffered an amputation of an arm and a leg both at the same time.

[11 : 41] That's not to say nothing of how his heart must have felt. This is a time of such bereavement as we have torn the very heart out of the children of Israel and if that is what it did for the people as a whole what must it have done to Joshua personally after 40 years of living with and serving Moses so closely.

But the Lord knew what he was doing all this time. whilst one ministry ends and another is taken up then.

This is how the Lord works. This is how he works throughout the Old Testament and the New. We see that when Saul dies it is time for David to enter into his kingship and yet the Lord has been preparing David years beforehand.

We see that our Lord only begins his own public ministry. Matthew chapter 4 verse 12 when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison he departed into Galilee and leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum which is upon the sea coast and aboard his Zabolim and Naphtali.

Mark likewise tells us chapter 1 verse 14 after that John was put in prison Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus was already baptized he was already in a sense prepared he had been beginning to minister a wee bit but his own public ministry did not enter into his own until the Lord closed off John's ministry by putting him in prison and so Jesus knew when one has ended it is time for the next to begin and so likewise Joshua here would have been brought had brought home for him in terms too painful almost to imagine that one ministry has ended and another has got now to begin.

[13 : 42] Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom how would he acquire such wisdom? Book of Job remember says in chapter 28 and verse 12 but where shall wisdom be found and where is the place of understanding man knoweth not the price that all neither is it found in the land of the living the depths sayeth it is not in me and the seas sayeth it is not with me it cannot be gotten for gold neither shall silver be weighed for the price that all and at the end of the chapter then did he see it and declare it he prepared it yea and searched it out and unto man he said behold the feet of the Lord that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom the fear of the Lord the knowledge of his word was upon him this is why the Lord says to him this book of the law verse 8 of Joshua 1 shall not depart out of thy mouth for thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written in him for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success it's not that there was anything magical in Moses

Moses himself is not God Moses is mortal but Moses had received and passed on the living law of the living God and the Lord says this is what you are to go by I have given you my word I have given you my spirit go on this and go forward and he says in our texts verse 5 of 9 there shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of our life as I was with Moses so I will be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake thee notice the common thread here why did Moses succeed because I was with Moses and as I was with Moses I will be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake thee verse 9 have not I commanded thee be strong and have a good courage be not afraid neither be thou to sleep for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest one time one ministry one work has ended and another is required to begin however little heart

Joshua may have for it because although you know we don't know what age Joshua is at this stage we know that he was a young man Exodus 33 verse 11 there when he's in the tabernacle of Moses but we don't know what that means we know that when he dies we are told in chapter 24 verse 29 the servant of the Lord Joshua the son of man died being 110 years old but we don't know how far away that is we know he's 110 when he dies but we don't know how many years of conquering the land and taking up the possession is occupied before that the likelihood is that he is probably either now at this stage in his 60s or early 70s because a young man is probably mid to late 20s or just about 30 if he's going to have sufficient respect to be able to lead people in battle to be able to take up responsibilities and servanthood and training he is probably mid to late 60s or about 70 at this stage in chapter 1 you think

Abram was 75 when he left Hanan when the Lord just began to work with him God's timings are not our timings the point is that all of Joshua's previous years of what we might call it apprenticeship not only were they not for nothing but they were being well used God was not wasting any of those years and in a sense when one ministry is pronounced is having ended and Joshua's is ready to begin in a sense all of his life up to this point has been a preparation for this hour now there's various leaders in the history of the world who might likewise recognise these things a particular point in their life and they could say everything beforehand was leading up for this hour it is reputed that Winston Churchill thought in those terms that he recognised that towards the beginning of the second world war all his previous military and political experience had been preparing him for this hour when he was the man for the moment there and then and we must say that under God's prominence he was the Lord's chosen vessel to work in a way that perhaps nobody else could work at that time certainly this is the case with George Watt all of his life up to this point has not been vanity not been wasted not been for nothing it has been a used and profitable preparation for this hour all of his life up to that point has been leading up to this hour when he is compelled to take up the reins that he doesn't really want and for which he doesn't feel adequate but it has all been a preparation for this time and we know that he is afraid and we know that he doesn't feel up to it he doesn't feel strong but again the Lord's strength is what sustains him that I was with Moses so I will be with thee

I will not fail thee nor forsake thee have not I commanded thee be strong and have a good courage be not afraid neither be thou dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee whether soever thou goest this is the promise of God so often we are used to having somebody else tell us lead us guide us direct us but the greatest and most important thing in our life is not what we do or what lands we conquer or where we go physically or geographically the promised land the children of Israel are about to enter into is a physical promised land it is the land of Canaan it can be found on a map every Sunday school room is full of these maps and depictions of the holy land that we can all find it on a globe and in an atlas and so on it is a physical land but as well as being a physical land it is also a picture an illustration of the true ultimate promised land into which the Lord calls his children to enter and entering into that promised land is not an easy thing to do the Lord himself says enter in at the straight gate the tight little narrow gate because broad is the way and wide is the gate that leads to destruction and many there be that go into that human nature desires an easy way and a smooth road and a wide gate and the devil gives you that he will say this is the way come this way look it's wide it's easy it's straightforward come this way but straight is the gate tight difficult squeezing through it it's hard narrow is the way that leads to life eternal because it is supernatural it's not by nature it's not a fallen nature it's not natural to us it is supernatural it is flowing against the stream it is swimming against the current it is overcoming our human natural fallen inclinations it is going against the grain of our sin it is only by the power and grace of God that we are ever enabled to do it but it is what we are called to do it is the great calling of our life it is the ultimate purpose for why we are put upon this earth all of our life up to this point has been leading us to that hour and we are called upon to enter in to that relationship with the Lord which is the very gateway to the promised land now I'm always like and I'm sure you've heard me say in the past to use an illustration also of the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh that we read about in this chapter now they desire a measure of their inheritance already on the east side of the

[22 : 15] Jordan and because it was a good place for sheep and flocks and her to say we don't really want to go across the Jordan we want it here we want this as our land and in the Lord's perfect providence of course yes they get it and yes it's what's arranged for them and they're allowed to take it provided they help their brother enter into their inheritance and what I personally always understand from this is that it's not that they go against God's word and although it's only that land which is west of the Jordan which is envisaged as the promised land as such what we find is because of their desire and because of their willingness to wake upon the Lord it's as though the promised land comes out to meet them it is as though a little portion of the promised land comes eastward to envelope that which they themselves have desired in the same way that the earnest of our inheritance is given to us now we are not in heaven even if we are in Christ even if we love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind strength we are not yet in heaven we are not ripe for glory and yet something of the promised land comes to us now it comes to us it comes east of the Jordan it comes to meet us even yet so we can say yes our inheritance has begun this is not yet the fullness of it this is not yet the fulfilment of it but it has begun it has come east across the Jordan it has come to where we are the Lord the Lord has come down amongst us to show us what God is like he that hath seen me hath seen the

Father and said trust and believe in me and you shall have all that is laid up for you in glory all of your life friends is a preparation for that event a preparation for that hour and if we will not have it if we will not desire to enter into that inheritance to that glory what is God's judgment like he did with all the Israelites and the woman who said okay you don't want to go in my judgment is you don't get to go in you don't want it not only do you not have to take it but you're not going to be allowed to take it if you won't have what I freely give you then you will not have it and their carcasses fell in the wilderness and they were unable to enter into the promised land even Moses was unable to enter into the promised land because they provoked him and he spake and advised him with his lips Joshua is the one whose purpose now is to lead them over the

Jordan whatever it be the task or the duty that is before us in our life however difficult however hard the duties of this world may be there is no duty calling or requirement in your life which is more important than making your calling and direction sure all of the experience of your life up to this point all that you have gone through all the tears all the difficulties all the problems all the joys and all the experiences nothing is lost with the Lord every tear is bottled every sigh is recorded every experience is for a purpose not only is he able to restore the years that the locusts have eaten he is able to show you how he is able to use all that you have gone through all that you have experienced all that has been in your life it has all been to a purpose and it has all been leading up to this hour and there will not always be somebody there to say this is the way walking in it there will not always be the Moses the leader the one to whom we look the one who may be precious to our hearts and may be dear to our souls they will not always be there and we do not promise that they will be the hour comes while they however much beloved they may be are taken from us what do we do then we look to the

Lord who himself promises as I was with Moses so I will be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake thee the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest this is a true promised land into which you are called upon to enter this is a true inheritance an eternal inheritance to which you are invited all of your life has been a preparation for this don't let it be wasted don't let it be for nothing oh yes you may lack courage Joshua lacked courage we know that he lacked courage how do we know that because God doesn't say or do anything in vain and we find that four times in this chapter he is told to be strong and to have courage or to be courageous verse 6 be strong and have a good courage for unto this people thou shalt divide for inheritance the land verse 7 only be thou strong and very courageous and verse 9 have not I commanded thee be strong and have a good courage and again at verse 18 at the end the Reubenettes and the

Gadites say to them only be strong and have a good courage four times now why do you keep saying to someone be strong if they're not actually in need of strength but he was why do you say be of a good courage unless they are lacking in courage God's word doesn't waste so much as one word one syllable and Joshua is told four times in one chapter be strong because he knew that he was weak and have courage because he knew he had none he didn't have courage he was afraid he didn't have strength he was weak and in that weakness and in that lack of strength and in that fear the Lord picks him up and says I will be with thee as I was with Moses I will not fear thee nor forsake thee the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest that is

[28 : 48] God's promise to Joshua it is God's promise likewise to us the name Joshua means Jehovah is salvation that is what it means and this is the one they were to follow now when Moses was gone and of course as I'm sure you're aware Joshua is the Hebrew they put it into the Greek of the New Testament and the same name translates as Jesus this is who we are to follow now because he will never leave us nor forsake us he will never be taken from us unless we turn away from him as I was with Moses so I will be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake thee they may lack courage but the Lord says I will give you courage you may lack strength but the Lord says I'm strong enough for both of us you don't have to be super man or super woman you just have to be faithful and you have to be obedient and you have to follow where the Lord leads and you find like Joshua that when you obey things happen he probably thought they'll never listen to me they won't do to what

I say the way they did what Moses says they won't obey my commands they won't follow me and lo and behold when he obeys the Lord and he takes the Lord at his word and he takes the Lord's strength for his strength they do Joshua says we're going across the Jordan and they go across the Jordan Joshua says jump and they jump Joshua says do this and they do it because the Lord has put on him the same power and authority that he put upon Moses and it was not from Moses this authority it was from the Lord as was the strength as was the courage as was the ability as was the direction it was all from God and that which he gave to Joshua he would give to you too if you would recognize that all of your life has been leading up to this hour pained we are bereaved and broken in heart and we do not necessarily understand the

Lord's inscrutable providence but the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away blessed be the name of the Lord who hath not left us nor forsaken us but says that the promised land is ahead of you others have gone in before you now is your time to take up this invitation and go forward blessed good love love