

Enter at Your Own Rest

Studies in the Book of Joshua

“Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it”

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Text

Joshua 1:1-9

Topic

God gives Joshua His Word that the children of Israel will possess every place their feet tread upon in the Promised Land

Title

“The Tread of Victory and the Analogy of the Feet”

Joshua 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

Joshua 1:2 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel.

Joshua 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

Joshua 1:4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

Joshua 1:5 No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

Joshua 1:6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Joshua 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

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.

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go."

Introduction

Most of us are familiar with job performance reviews. God gave one to Joshua in chapter thirteen:

Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

By the time we get to God's assessment we'll see that Joshua had accomplished much. But there was much more to be accomplished and God encouraged him to make progress.

I think at almost any point in our Christian lives God could lovingly say to us, "there remains very much land yet to be possessed." It's not necessarily a criticism and it's never a condemnation. It is simply our Lord seeking to encourage us to experience the fullness of our spiritual blessings.

The tribes of Israel conquered the promised land of Canaan but along the way, for various reasons, settled for less territory than God had allotted them.

It becomes a type and an illustration for us. In our case the 'territory' isn't a physical geography so much as it is a spiritual one. Our 'territories' are all the various aspects of our lives: marriage, family, church, employment, and anything and everything we think, do, or say. Even if we have accomplished much in each of those areas there is always more to be accomplished as we walk by faith claiming God's promises and applying His precepts and principles.

Unfortunately, like the tribes of Israel we, for various reasons, can settle for less in our territories. Hence the Lord's wonderful prompting, "there remains very much land yet to be possessed."

Our studies in Joshua can be a watershed moment in our lives. If we will take God's performance review to heart and learn from Israel's successes and failures we will be invigorated to make progress in our territories. If not we will continue to simply grow old in them!

The book begins with a simple enough exhortation: Get moving! Joshua is told to rally the tribes and conquer the land. He's encouraged that anywhere and everywhere their feet **tread** they will conquer. God had already given them title to the land; they only needed to walk in it to claim it.

Just as Israel had to tread further into their physical territory so, too, must we tread further into our spiritual 'territories.' There are obstacles and opponents but they are already overcome if we will simply walk by faith against them.

I see a two-fold encouragement in these opening verses. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You're Urged To Tread Further Into Your Territories, and #2 You're Encouraged To Tread Fearlessly In Your Territories.

#1 You're Urged To Tread Further Into Your Territories (v1-4)

After four hundred years of slavery in Egypt and forty more years of wandering in the wilderness the tribes of Israel were finally about to enter the land promised to them as Abraham's descendants. The land was theirs by grant from its original owner, God. Fierce enemies were entrenched in the land. No matter! All they need do is walk by faith and (literally) walls would come crumbling down.

You still face fierce enemies. No matter! They were defeated by Jesus at the Cross. All you need do is walk by faith and you will be the overcomer of any and all opponents and obstacles.

Joshua 1:1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

No one is indispensable. **Moses** was gone but God's work moved forward.

Joshua had been born into slavery in Egypt. As a firstborn son he was saved on the first Passover by the blood of the slain lamb. He went on to distinguish himself as a servant to Moses, as a soldier

leading the Israelites in battle, and as a faithful spy who encouraged them to go into the land.

You remember the spy story: At the borders of the promised land of Canaan twelve spies gave their report. Ten said, "No way." Two said, "Way!" The two were Joshua and Caleb. As a result of their refusal to enter the land and walk in it by faith God determined that entire generation must die wandering in the wilderness. All but Joshua and Caleb, that is. Joshua would lead them in. The time had come.

Joshua 1:2 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel.

Joshua 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

The land was God's to give and He gave it to Abraham all the way back in Genesis. They only needed to tread into it to possess it.

Joshua 1:4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

With all the negotiating going on in the Middle East over Israel's right to exist it might be a good idea to remember these ancient boundaries of their land as granted by God.

It is interesting to note that never in her history has Israel occupied all the land granted to her by God. Not even during the reigns of kings David and Solomon. Israel will fully occupy all the promised land when Jesus returns in His Second Coming.

It's going to be a key to our benefiting from the example and instruction in Joshua to see our lives in terms of territories we've been granted by God to conquer. I often use marriage as an example because it's something we all can relate to at some level. Marriage is in trouble generally, as an institution, not because of modern socioeconomic problems but because we are abandoning God's principles and precepts for it. Even Christian's are failing in their marriages. The solution isn't dissolution! It is to go further into

the spiritual territory of your marriage! It is to conquer the opponents and obstacles that seek to destroy your marriage. They are things like selfishness, unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, resentment and the like. God has given us all the resources we require to overcome these. If we do not it is because we are 'settling' for less and therefore falling short.

Throughout our studies I'll probably use our serving here at church as an example of your territory. It's appropriate for two reasons:

1. One, it is an experience we share in common as we serve together.
2. Two, we can and should see ourselves as a group that God wants to use to conquer territory already granted to us in our local communities and around the globe.

Here, then, is a good way to begin. Think about your area or areas of service to God. Even if you are doing an adequate job, are you going further into your territory? Can you honestly say you have fully, totally conquered every part of it? Or have you settled for less?

I'm not asking; God is! And it's not to criticize or condemn but rather to encourage you. You see, if I'm not moving forward I am really falling backward. The Christian life is not a life of maintaining my position but of going further and further until the Lord calls me home.

We are not left to fend for ourselves against the opponents and obstacles in our various territories.

#2 You're Encouraged To Tread Fearlessly In Your Territory (v5-9)

The obstacles were real and the opponents were fierce. They had inspired fear a generation prior and could do so again. The generation about to enter the land could easily become dismayed and fearful.

God gave Joshua and through him the tribes of Israel reasons to **tread** fearlessly. They are spiritual truths applicable to us as well.

Joshua 1:5 No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

The presence of the Lord was and is the key to overcoming any and all fears. By His presence we mean more than just Him always being with you. It is the understanding that in His providence all things work together for good in your life. It is the knowledge that His thoughts for you and your future are always good and based upon His everlasting love. Thus you need never fear what anyone or anything can do to you.

God said, *as I was with Moses*. You are not the first person called upon to tread by faith and conquer enemies. You have examples in Scripture to base your faith upon. They were men and women just like you. And God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Joshua 1:6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

This would qualify as an unconditional promise to Joshua. Our struggles in many territories of our lives would be greatly eased if we believed the many unconditional promises in God's Word.

And that brings us to our greatest resource. God has told us how to tread in every territory in His written Word. The next two verses contain keys to unlock our understanding of His Word.

Joshua 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

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.

Joshua had only *the law of Moses*. It's a reference to what we know as the first five books of the Bible. We have the complete written Word of God – Genesis through the Revelation.

First we're told to *observe to do* the Word of God. It doesn't say to observe and then do; it says to *observe to do*. Is there a difference?

I think so. **Observe to do** indicates a predisposition that whatever God says in the Bible I will submit myself to. It's also a reminder that my observation of what God says to do is itself an empowering to accomplish it. If God says to husbands, **love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her**, then I **can** do it. Likewise a wife can submit to her husband. She observes it in the Bible and with the observation comes the empowering.

Second we're told, **do not turn from [the Bible] to the right hand or to the left**. Why would I? I would if I thought there was some better wisdom available to me. There isn't – not in the territories I'm called to tread upon. Nevertheless the world offers me its wisdom, doesn't it? It wants me to add worldly wisdom to the teaching of the Word of God. It only serves to weaken the power of God's Word to overcome my obstacles and opponents.

Third, we're told that the Bible is not to **depart from your mouth**. That's a curious phrase! It's explained by what comes next: **but you shall meditate in it day and night**. Get out of your mind the eastern, mystical understanding of meditation. The word here means, literally, *to mutter to one's self*. The idea is that you are constantly talking to yourself from and about the Word of God. You read it, re-read it, keep reading it and then think about it, asking God to grant insight from it. Reflection might be the best word to describe this muttering-meditation.

Fourth,

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you?

Slaves and servants and soldiers get **commanded**. This reminds me that my life doesn't belong to me. I was redeemed by the blood of my Savior. My life is His to do as He pleases – not mine to do what pleases me. If that sounds too restricting, too confining, then you don't fully appreciate the Person doing the commanding! To stay with our previous example: If you think your personal pleasure in marriage is more important than pleasing God in your marriage then you will fall short in that territory.

Joshua 1:9 ...Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go."

That's how this section started so this is telling us that fearlessness is made real by the things in-between that we discussed.

I really do believe our studies in Joshua can be life-changing both personally and corporately:

1. Personally each of us can get shaken out of our apathy or complacency in some territory and make progress that has eluded us. For example: Maybe there is a trait in your life that you've given-up seeking to bring under submission to God. Something that when it occurs you simply say, "That's just the way I am." God has given you victory over it and you can conquer it if you'll hear Him and tread further into the territory of your character development.
2. Corporately we can take inventory of our life as a church. For example: We're coming up on five years in our building. Have we conquered all the territory we thought we would when we first got here? Are there areas where we are settled and no longer moving forward?

As I ask these questions there is a tendency, like in any performance review, to become defensive.

I'm not asking these questions! God is. He's asking them of me and of each of you.

He's not asking them to criticize and there is no condemnation in them. They are for my good; for your good; and for His glory.

As we work through this book pray for a heart that is willing to receive God's Word. God has already granted you victory in your territories. He's urging you to go further into them and to respond fearlessly in them.