

# *Joshua*



*A Life  
of  
Service*

*Titus Chu*

Joshua: A Life of Service  
by Titus Chu

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# 1

## Committed to Serve

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). I have seen this declaration hanging on the wall in many homes. Many young people make this declaration even before they have a family. Those who have been married awhile have a little more realization and may declare, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord...somewhat.” The older we become, the more difficult it is to make Joshua’s declaration because we know what is involved. Yet it was not in his younger days that Joshua declared this but at the end of his life. He was not defeated as most find themselves at his age. Instead, backed by years of experience, Joshua was able to declare with assurance, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!” Joshua understood how much was involved in this declaration. He had learned many difficult lessons while serving for forty years in the wilderness under Moses, then leading Israel into the good land.

Everyone likes to hear the stories about Joshua leading the armies of Israel into battle to conquer the good land, but few pay attention to the years of learning that prepared Joshua for this. However, if we wish to fight for the Lord as Joshua did and to declare with Joshua that we will serve the Lord, we need to pass through what Joshua passed through and learn the lessons that he learned.

## Joshua's Preparation

By the end of his life, Joshua ruled Israel for God. At that point, he was a picture of Christ as Head over His church. His preparation for ruling Israel was in three stages: commitment, learning, and manifestation. These stages show us what it means to follow the Lord and serve Him.

God created human beings to express His Son, Jesus Christ, on the earth. Their true potential can only be realized if they become born again as Christians. Once they become Christians, the highest quality of life can only be experienced if they love Jesus. And among those who truly love and even give themselves to Jesus, the highest attainment will be with those who decide to stand for what God is doing on earth according to His heart. Before we talk about serving the Lord, we must have this basic understanding.

Many cry out in frustration, feeling they cannot live a victorious Christian life of serving the Lord. Yet surely the Lord is with everyone who has believed in Him. In fact, He is the One who initiates our desire to consecrate ourselves to Him and serve Him. If we want to serve as Joshua served, we must cooperate with the Lord to learn the lessons Joshua learned.

## Borne on Eagles' Wings

In Exodus 19:4 the Lord told Moses, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." God did not require the children of Israel to overcome the handicaps and obstacles which seemed to block their exodus from Egypt. He simply put them on His back and flew! Likewise, we today are in the heavenlies with Christ not due to our own efforts but because God raised us up (Eph. 2:6). We did not climb up to this high peak; God bore us on eagles' wings. God brought us out of where we were and placed



us in the heavenly realm so that our focus and enjoyment might be nothing other than Christ Himself. He did not bring us to this point to bless our talent or so that our service to Him might be successful. His purpose in bringing us to the heavenly realm was to bring us to Himself.

Therefore we shouldn't be concerned about how hard we try to serve the Lord. When Watchman Nee passed away, there were perhaps sixty thousand meeting in the churches in China raised up through his ministry. Today, however, after thirty-six years, there are at least six million meeting in China who do not focus upon any particular practice or method but simply stand according to the truth revealed in the Word. What was it that Watchman Nee did to nurture this? We cannot point to any particular matter. God just desires to bear us on His wings into the divine, mystical, heavenly realm so that we may focus on Christ Himself. As for His work, that is up to Him.

### **His Treasure, Priesthood, and Testimony**

The Lord told Moses that the people's responsibility was simply to keep their focus upon Him. This is why He said that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant, they would become His treasure on the earth (Exo. 19:5). God loves every human being, but once we become Christians, we become very special to Him. Among all peoples, we are His special treasure (1 Pet. 2:9). From the moment we believe in Jesus, we begin to stand out to God; and the more we give ourselves to Him, the more our living and service will express the beauty of this treasure. The church today, as God's corporate testimony upon the earth, is the significance of Israel becoming God's special treasure.

The Lord's treasured people also become to Him a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:6). In the Old Testament, God gained a group of priests who functioned together as a priesthood. In the New

Testament, God has gained us so that we may serve Him together in the church life as His priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

In Exodus 19:6, the Lord also told Moses that Israel would become to Him a holy nation. Being a nation speaks of testimony. The testimony of China, for instance, was strengthened during the 2008 Olympics. For years, China had not been able to lift up its head among the nations due to its experience during the Opium Wars of the 1920s. Now, however, because of all the gold medals it has won, it has somewhat reestablished its testimony on the world stage. Once again, the people of China are proud to be Chinese.

Earthly nations care for their testimonies. Does God need a testimony? Some think that God needs nothing, except perhaps to get people saved. God, however, also needs a testimony. God raised up Israel to be a holy nation upon the earth. Since only God is holy, to be a holy nation is to be a testimony of God. He has raised us up to be His testimony as well. How good it is if people come to our gatherings and see that God is among us!

God's desire to have Israel as a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation inspired Joshua to give himself to the Lord and to serve only Him.

### Joshua's Beginning

When God first called Moses, He selected Aaron to work with Moses (Exo. 4:14–15; 7:1), but who selected Joshua? The Bible does not tell us. Joshua, along with a man named Hur, seems to have been selected by Moses along the way. His name had been Hoshea (Num. 13:8), which means *deliverer* (Strong), but Moses changed it to Joshua (Num. 13:16), which means *Jehovah is salvation* (Davis). Moses may have said, "Young man, you are not the deliverer; salvation is of Jehovah!" Moses' changing of Joshua's name probably indicates he was marked out to be the leader. Hur was likely an older man suited to administrative

duties, while Joshua was a younger and more vigorous man better suited to warfare. Hur, along with Aaron, became involved with executive duties to aid Moses, while Joshua commanded the army of Israel (Exo. 17:8–10). From the first time he appears in the record, Joshua is marked by his commitment to God.

### Joshua's Victory over Amalek

The first lesson Joshua learned occurred as he won a great victory which he could not claim as his own.

When we first love the Lord and give ourselves to Him, we often find ourselves in victory. When I first believed in Jesus and told others they also had to believe, they would agree with me and pray to receive the Lord. Today, if I tell people they need to believe in Jesus, they ask me to leave them alone. When I was eighteen, I loved the Lord like a young Joshua. I could tell the Lord, "I will fight!" But today many tell Him, "You want me to fight? I'll think about it." How I wish I could intervene in the thought process that causes people to draw back! Without commitment, there is no way a person can follow the Lord. As soldiers, we must have the attitude that we are willing to be placed at the forefront of the battle.

The children of Israel were encamped at Rephidim (Exo. 17:1), a name which means *places of rest* (Hitchcock). They were in the wilderness, but they were at rest. It was here that the Lord provided water out of the smitten rock (v. 6). Christ is our smitten rock, having been smitten on the cross (1 Cor. 10:4). We may have rest, but without experiencing Christ as our thirst-quencher, we do not have the truest rest. We must hide in the death of Christ, who has been smitten for us, realizing that it is in His death that He supplies to us all His riches.

Water in that land would have been a thing to covet. When the water came forth, Amalek also came forth (Exo. 17:8). The

Amalekites were a nomadic people, probably small in number. The Israelites, however, numbered in the millions. When the Amalekites saw that the Israelites had water, this probably spurred them on. To destroy all of Israel would have been too difficult, but to cut the Israelites off from their source of water would have seemed possible. Thus, Amalek sought to cut Israel off from its life supply.

### Amalek Within

According to many Bible teachers, Amalek represents the flesh. What Amalek seems to represent at this point, however, was not merely the flesh, but rather the flesh seeking after the blessing of God. The water they coveted came from God. Once we begin to love the Lord and experience His blessing in our lives, “Amalek” will try to take over that supply. We may even find this happening within ourselves. When we receive some blessing from the Lord, it is easy to feel we have finally arrived as Christians. We try to usurp God’s blessing for our own glory.

After Joshua defeated Amalek, God told Moses, “Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua” (Exo. 17:14). Joshua may have defeated the Amalekites outwardly, but a greater Amalek still lurked within, coveting the glory of the victory the Lord had given them. We like to think that we are the reason God blesses us. As soon as God blesses us, our flesh rises up to rob God of His glory. Outwardly we may say, “We have been blessed, and it is all the Lord’s mercy,” but inwardly something is already attempting to supplant the work of the Spirit. Therefore, we need to be reminded that it is the Lord who is the Victor, not we ourselves.

### Victory through Prayer

When Joshua and his army went forth to fight the Amalekites

at Rephidim, Moses went up to the top of a hill with Aaron and Hur to stand with the rod of God in his hands (Exo. 17:9). When Moses lifted up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, but when he lowered them, Amalek began to gain ground (v. 11). It was not that, as Joshua prevailed, Moses lifted up his hands in praise. Neither was it that Joshua and his army won the day through their own valiant effort. This became the first lesson impressed upon Joshua. He had committed himself to follow the Lord and went fearlessly to the battlefield to fight, but it was Moses who was really doing the fighting. This is the first lesson we all must learn in serving the Lord: we must fight, but we must also realize that our victory is based upon the prayer of Christ and His interceding believers. In this portion, Moses represents both the heavenly Christ and His believers praying for us as we battle for Him on the earth (Heb. 4:14; 7:25; 1 Tim. 2:8).

We should feel very free to try different things as we serve, but we cannot say any success is based upon our efforts. Anyone with talent can come in and have some outward success. If we are caught by that, we will miss Christ's way. Thus, the first thing we must realize is how incapable we are, and how capable the Lord is.

As Moses' hands grew heavy, Aaron and Hur placed a stone under him for him to sit upon and supported his arms until the going down of the sun (Exo. 17:12). Joshua's job was to chop off the Amalekites' heads, but it was Moses' prayer that caused the Amalekites necks to become exposed to Joshua's sword. Our experience is like this. When I was young, as long as I preached, people got saved. Hundreds were saved in a few months time, and over sixty were baptized. When Moses prayed with his hands lifted up, it was as though the Amalekites lined up for slaughter by Joshua and his men. When Moses' hands were no longer lifted up, however, the Israelites lost ground and were pursued by

Amalek. When Moses' hands were again lifted up, the Amalekites fell under the Israelites' sword once more. This is our initial experience of spiritual battle. When it is over, we do not even know how it was possible that we prevailed. How did such a revival take place? Why were people so readily brought to the Lord? It was because Christ and His interceding believers had been lifting up their hands in prayer.

The church must stand with those fighting the battle in the gospel so that those they speak with may be ready to receive. Those who go forth should realize it was not they themselves who win the battle but rather those who stand with their arms outstretched. It is the praying believers and the interceding Christ who bring in the victory.

### **Moses' Prayer and Joshua's Sword**

The Bible credits Joshua with the victory (Exo. 17:13) even though it was Moses' prayer that assured it. Is this fair? Joshua's army either retreated from the Amalekites or prevailed against them due to Moses' prayer. Within the last few years, some young people have moved to cities in the Cleveland area to raise up new churches. They may seem prevailing as they do this, but their success is only through the prayer of the churches, and particularly the prayer of the older ones. Still, God says, "The young people won the victory!" even though the older ones assured the outcome through their prayer. Without Moses, Joshua and his army may have been chased all the way back to Egypt! Because of Moses' prayer, Joshua defeated Amalek and was given the credit for it.

This is the first lesson we must learn as we begin to serve the Lord. Every spiritual blessing initially comes from Christ and from those interceding for us. Still, the victory is ours, even though it was not truly ours alone. It was both the prayer of Moses and the sword of Joshua that won the victory.

## A Written Reminder

The Lord told Moses to write these events in a book as a memorial and to recount them in the hearing of Joshua (Exo. 17:14). It seems these things were written particularly for Joshua after he triumphed on the battlefield and returned from battle to great fanfare. Moses then may have spoken in his ear, “Joshua, the Lord has required that I write something in a book and read it to you. Do you think you won the victory? It is God who won the victory!” Joshua would have to admit that if Moses had not lifted up his hands, he would have been defeated. Due to Moses’ prayer, his sword became sharp. We are needed on the battlefield, but our experience, labor, and fruit are all due to the prayer of the heavenly Christ and His interceding believers. Without them, we could do nothing. This is a lesson we must learn from the very beginning of our service, even to the end of our days.

In verse 14, the Lord also said that He would “utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” Even though today the race of Amalek is gone, the inward Amalek remains. Outwardly it is over, but inwardly it continues. One day, however, it will be utterly blotted out, even within. Joshua needed to know this.

After Watchman Nee’s martyrdom in 1972, little was done to care for the churches he established in China, yet they continued to grow. When I saw this, I realized that, apart from the Lord’s blessing, our labor really is in vain. Even if He does bless, we too easily take the honor from Him. Compared to Watchman Nee, we have done little, yet even that can cause us to feel worthy of honor.

I have raised up many saints and many churches, and yet that “book” is always there, whispering to me that Amalek has to go. Until then, Amalek is always ready to rise up and lay claim to the honor that belongs to the Lord.

## “The Lord Is My Banner”

After the battle, Moses built an altar and called it Jehovah-nissi, “The Lord is my banner” (Exo. 17:15). From the day we begin to wholly pursue Christ, we raise up Christ as our a banner, declaring that He alone is our focus and boast. He is our unique center. Suppose we all raise up such a banner. Then we would not care about anything except loving Jesus, honoring Jesus, and exalting Jesus. When we exalt this name, we declare that from this day forward our life is for Christ alone.

Thus, Joshua had a very good beginning. He was committed to the Lord, and he gave himself to fight. His victory, however, was dependent upon others fighting behind the scenes. He learned to be watchful, for something will always rise up to rob the Lord of His rightful honor. One day, this robbing enemy will be utterly blotted out. Until that time of complete victory, the Lord remains Joshua’s banner.



## 2

# Learning to Serve

Joshua was totally committed to the Lord and to His interest. Because of this, he was chosen to fight against Amalek. In the process, he learned it was Moses' prayer, representing the interceding Christ, that was responsible for the victory. Our actions are needed, but apart from the intercession of Christ they are in vain. It is Christ who wins each victory. This must impress us from the very beginning of our service. As the psalmist wrote, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psa. 127:1). Although the Lord graciously credited Joshua with the victory, Joshua was clear he was not truly responsible for it. It was the Lord who gained the victory through Moses' prayer with the support of Aaron and Hur.

Because God knows how easily we forget, He instructed Moses, saying, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua" (Exo. 17:14). This was to remind Joshua that, although he would serve and fight for the Lord's interests all his life according to his great abilities and gifts, God would determine the outcome. No matter how smart or capable Joshua was in his warfare with Amalek, until Moses raised his hands, nothing worked. If we gain a victory for the Lord, it is because the Lord is already the Victor, not because we are so wonderful. If we are successful in some situation, it is because Christ is on the throne. Therefore, the first lesson we must learn

as we seek to serve the Lord is that it is His intercession, not our ability, that wins the victory.

### Jethro's Advice

At this point, God taught Joshua a second lesson. Moses was taking care of the children of Israel, which was a tremendous task. His father-in-law Jethro arrived, bringing with him Moses' wife and sons (Exo. 18:5). I believe that Jethro was a godly person, for he rejoiced that God had brought the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt (vv. 9–10). However, he was bothered by what he saw in the Israelite camp. People were standing from morning to evening, waiting to speak to Moses. Therefore, according to his view and understanding, he gave Moses some advice. He said, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself" (vv. 17–18). Isn't that logical? There were two million people and only one judge. How could that work? Moses would surely wear himself out.

Jethro continued, "Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you" (v. 19). Jethro told Moses what to do, yet we must remember that these were God's people. Many times, we prize man's counsel above God's. Jethro advised, "Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do" (vv. 19–20). Doesn't this sound like good advice?

In verse 25 we are told that "Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." Moses followed his father-in-law's advice and organized the people.

## God's Way versus Man's Way

When I was young, I felt God had given Moses a marvelous father-in-law. His suggestion to teach people the statutes and laws and organize them into various levels so that the pressure was off Moses seemed wise. Then one day I read a statement made by Watchman Nee that we need to consider the difference between God's way and Jethro's way. I was surprised. Wasn't that what God wanted? Hadn't Jesus also organized the five thousand people into groups when He distributed the fish and bread (Luke 9:14)?

I considered this matter for years. I eventually realized that many things can be done properly in the church life without God. God would rather things be messy with Him than proper without Him. Man's way is to organize things so that they run efficiently. The Bible reveals that everything in the church life must be initiated by God. Are we able to see the difference? In one sense, there was nothing wrong with Jethro's way, but in another sense, it was very wrong. The source of everything in the church life must be Christ alone. Man's way, no matter how good it seems, must not be allowed to replace Christ's headship in the church.

What God wants is what He wants, and God and we are often in totally different realms. Most Christians have a concept of what their service to the Lord should be. Church leaders may have great plans for their church's future, yet what God wants may be very different. What God has in view and what we have in view often simply do not match. Jethro gave Moses good advice about how to handle God's people, but Jethro was not God. God's people had to be brought to God's way.

Joshua had to learn the lesson that "right" things may not be right. God does not take delight in something just because it gives good results. A spiritual man realizes that God's view is totally different from man's.

## No Other Gods

In response to Moses' taking the advice of Jethro in organizing the people, God spoke to Moses about two things: first, only He is God, and second, three times a year Israel was to hold a feast unto Him.

God told Moses, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exo. 20:2–3). His desire was not to give ordinances nor to organize the people, but to challenge them: How many gods do you have? Even today, this question is not easy to answer.

I know a dear Christian who loves the Lord very much. He asked how I felt about his staying a little longer at his job so he might receive a severance package before beginning to serve the Lord full-time. At the time I agreed to this, but afterward I regretted I had. Instead, I wish I told him to simply follow the Lord and forget about the severance package. This is what the Lord told those who desired to follow Him (Luke 9:57–62). That package was a God-replacement. I spent a lot of time repenting before the Lord for this. We should have no other gods besides the Lord.

We must be clear about one thing: besides the Lord, there is no god. When we become overly concerned for our security, we violate this first principle. In our lives there should be no other god besides the Lord.

## No Other Source

Moses received and followed Jethro's advice to organize a system of judges in Israel. Opening to or depending upon a source other than God violates the principle that the Lord alone is God. Once Moses acted on this idea, his new way became his god.

We can find ourselves depending on many things other than

God. We may find that our job, our career, our degree, our spiritual training, our service, our church, or the young believers we shepherd are so many gods surrounding us. Yet the first thing the Lord makes clear is that besides Him we shall have no other gods.

What Moses' father-in-law told Moses became a way for them, but what the Lord unveiled to Moses was the secret of going on: We only worship God; we care for God and honor Him above all others; we only follow our Lord, even Jesus Christ, who is our God.

### **Keep the Feast**

The second thing the Lord said in His reaction to Moses' taking Jethro's advice was, "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year" (Exo. 23:14). God's solution to disagreements among His people was very different from Jethro's. His solution was to feast together.

Today's churches are still in danger of trying to solve problems among believers by turning to natural sources. God's way, however, is that we enjoy Him in a feasting life (1 Cor. 5:7–8). In such a church life, nothing is brought in but what is of God. There are no opinions or gossip. Instead, there is just feasting! The entire church life must be saturated with nothing besides God. The issue then is something wonderful.

In Exodus 24:9–13, Aaron, his sons, and the seventy elders of Israel ascended the mountain with Moses. There, they saw God and had a marvelous experience of eating and drinking in the presence of God. When we come to the point we only care for Christ, we are able to see God and eat and drink in His presence. These seventy elders may have been thinking, "Nothing could be better than this!" but God still needed something before He could be satisfied. He wanted to bring them into something more substantial.

## Receiving the Tablets of Stone

During this feast, God said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone (Exo. 24:12–13). So Moses took Joshua, and together they went further up the mountain to meet with God. At this point, God needed Joshua, someone who would fight for His interest, not Aaron, who was satisfied with the sweetness of His presence. Feasting was easy, but now the Lord called them to a further stage in their experience of Him. He gave them tablets of stone engraved with His laws. Something soft became very solid, something that was a teaching became engraved in stone, and something that was an understanding became a constitution.

## God’s Desire for His Testimony

In Exodus 25:8 the Lord told Moses, “Let [the children of Israel] make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” This sanctuary, the tabernacle Israel was to build as God’s dwelling place, would be His testimony among the nations.

We like feasting; the Lord likes being testified. The Lord satisfies us by becoming our feast; we satisfy Him by becoming His testimony.

You may have a very enjoyable church life, yet Christ may still not have His testimony. For this, we need to have the heart of a fighter. Joshua was the right person to accompany Moses for this assignment. The Lord’s charge was that Moses would build Him a tabernacle for His testimony. The people of Israel wanted something for their enjoyment, and the Lord promised to be that. However, the Lord’s desire was that His name would be exalted in their enjoyment of Him.

## Doing Everything according to the Pattern

God told Moses to make Him a sanctuary according to the

pattern He revealed to him on the mountain (Exo. 25:9). It was no longer a matter of feasting. God desired something further. He wanted the children of Israel to build a sanctuary, a tabernacle, with every detail matching the pattern He unveiled upon the mountain.

Many Christians experience human organization among God's people. Fewer learn to focus on Christ. Very, very few, however, learn to care only for the Lord's testimony, His habitation among His people. This, however, is the goal. Everything we do and have in the church life should be according to the heavenly pattern God has unveiled to us.

### **The Priesthood**

God also initiated the service of the priesthood at this time, telling Moses, "Take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar" (Exo. 28:1). Besides the tabernacle, Moses was to prepare the priesthood. With us also, the Lord desires both a testimony and a priesthood to maintain that testimony. These are beyond simply enjoying Christ in the church life. Our vision must advance, and our experience must advance with it.

### **Advancing**

We must learn to advance as God leads us. We should never envy another's success, and never despise the work of the Spirit. If we look at the success of a larger group, that is envy. Furthermore, we should not say, "We have it, and nobody else does." That is pride. We should have a humble spirit and seek to continue advancing.

We may have advanced from valuing human organization to caring only about Christ, yet God wants to bring us on to where we care not only about Christ, but also about the testimony of

Christ. If we truly care for Christ, then our lives should be given for the testimony of Christ. Thus God told Moses with Joshua that they must build the tabernacle and establish the priesthood. This represents today's church life.

## The Church Life

When I was young, I felt the church life was for old people, so I only went to young people's meetings. Then the Lord revealed to me that these old people were my brothers. Therefore, I began to go to the "old people's" meetings and found them very enjoyable. Besides loving the Lord and the church, I also began to love the church life. That is the priesthood.

The church life is a place of mutual care. We serve others and others serve us. If we preach the gospel and care for others or go to someone's home for dinner and read the Bible together, we are in the church life. We need to be fully in the church life if the Lord is to have His testimony.

After a hard day's work, many people come home, put their feet up, and relax. Their workday is over. The church life is not like this. The church meeting may be over, but the church life continues. The church life involves God, man, the church, the church meetings, and the gospel. The church life is a life of bringing people to Christ and Christ to people.

The typical Christian group would be happy to have a Jethro who could tell them what to do so that their group would be prevailing. But God would tell us, "You don't need a Jethro. You need Me, you need to enjoy Me, and you need to build up My testimony. For this, you need a healthy church life."

## Descending the Mountain

God finished His instruction to Moses and gave him the two tablets engraved by His hand (Exo. 31:18). I believe Moses walked slowly down the mountain, for he was very old. Perhaps Joshua



was helping him. Remember, Joshua had just seen something even Aaron had never seen. He must have been elated. He had seen the pattern of the tabernacle, the Lord's testimony, and the priesthood.

As they descended, Joshua heard noise and said, "There is a noise of war in the camp" (Exo. 32:17). People often hear what they want to hear. Because Joshua was a soldier, he assumed the noise was the noise of war, and he was ready to fight. Moses, being more mature, realized it was not the noise of victory or defeat, but the noise of singing (Exo. 32:18). Joshua was probably still in awe of all he had witnessed upon the mountain. He may have also felt he was Moses' equal or at least able to help him, having been present at this great event. Yet when they came down the mountain, Joshua learned that Moses still was the one with discernment. The younger man's ears were better, but the older man's ears were more accurate. The noise they had heard was the noise of people playing as they worshiped the golden calf. After Moses and Joshua arrived, there was judgment.

### **Patiently Abiding under the Lord's Government**

Before the building of the tabernacle described by God on the mountain, Moses pitched a tent outside the camp. He would go there to meet face-to-face with God and then return to camp. Joshua, however, was made keeper of this tent of meeting and remained there (Exo. 33:7–11). Given that this is the last mention of Joshua in Exodus, it seems Joshua remained there a long time. He did not feel he was being wasted; he knew that God was taking care of everything and everyone. He went through so much, yet he was content to be just a keeper at the tent Moses pitched. Even after we have received so much, we must learn patience. The more we know, the more we must learn to abide in the Lord's government.

If you want to be a Joshua, be prepared be trained and educated by God. Tell the Lord, “Everything Joshua learned I would also like to learn. I would like to learn not to trust anything from the world. I would like to only care for Christ and the enjoyment in Christ. I want to fight for Your testimony and for the healthy church life. With all the riches of Christ I gain, I also want to learn to be a tent keeper.”

Through his experience, Joshua learned many lessons. First, he encountered and defeated Amalek, which became a continual reminder to him to be watchful. Second, he witnessed Jethro’s attempt to help Moses, and third, he witnessed God’s response that they have no other gods. Fourth, he saw how God desired that they hold feasts unto Him, representing the enjoyment of Christ. Fifth, he was with Moses when God unveiled the pattern of the tabernacle and the priesthood for His testimony. Sixth, he learned patience by remaining at the tent of meeting. Are you ready to learn such lessons? If you are, then the Lord will be faithful to train you and use you as He did Joshua.

# 3

## Manifested to Serve

The book of Exodus ends with a glorious event: the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord filled it (Exo. 40:34). From that day forward, the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle during the day, and the fire was over it at night. Could anything be better? The Israelites seemed ready to do whatever the Lord required.

### Calling Out the Seventy

Moses felt afflicted due to the complaints of the people concerning food (Num. 11:1–15), so the Lord told Moses to gather together seventy men whom He would set over the people to help him (v. 16). They were to come to the tabernacle where the Lord would speak with them and put upon them the same Spirit that was upon Moses. Moses would not lose the Spirit God had given him, but he would now have to share it with these other seventy. Up until this time, Moses had been the undisputed leader. His face shone after leaving the Lord's presence, and all the people soberly stood at the doors of their tents as he passed by. What a glory! No one else had ever exercised this kind of divine authority. Now God was about to put His Spirit upon others as well.

Two of the seventy did not go to the tabernacle with the others but remained in the camp (v. 26). God put His Spirit upon all seventy and caused them to prophesy, including these

two. It seems these two men were not interested in becoming leaders. Instead of feeling privileged and proud to be a part of the selected group of elders, they seemed not to care. Yet as the others prophesied, they prophesied by the Lord's Spirit as well.

A young man reported these things to Moses. What the two did offended Joshua's disciplined and obedient character. He responded, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" (v. 28). Perhaps his understanding was that the Israelites should only have one coordinated voice; allowing other voices would lead to trouble. But Moses said, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (v. 29). Moses felt that if only seventy had prophesied, that was not good enough. He wished that all of God's people were prophets!

### Becoming Broad

A natural man thinks God's people must have only one coordinated voice with one teaching. God's way, however, is always to work according to His Spirit. If I were called to be one of the seventy, I would have done as Moses asked. Yet God is very broad and grand. He uses all such opportunities to develop His testimony. Therefore, we shouldn't be so narrow. We may have the Lord's presence with us, but other Christians do also. Therefore, we should not judge or forbid others (Luke 9:49–50). Joshua was exposed by Moses as being too narrow. A servant of the Lord must be broad, not narrow.

### Remaining Faithful to Our Commitment

This doesn't mean we should stop meeting with those with whom the Lord has placed us. We could visit a different congregation every week, but that would be foolish. For the sake of the Lord's testimony, we have to stand for what the Lord has committed to us and how He has led us. At the same time, our heart

should be very restful when we see others being led differently, for God is able to do beyond what we can do or see. Moses was very mature. His view was very broad. He wished that not only these two but that all two million of the Lord's people would prophesy. If that truly happened, of course, it would have been quite messy, but the sentiment was right. The grandness and broadness of Moses was a result of his trust in God.

Moses was clear that the Lord had commissioned him to work with the seventy. He did not disband them when he heard that the Lord had put His Spirit on the two in the camp. However, he also did not forbid the two, knowing that God was able to do something through them also. In fact, his desire was that the Lord would do something more through all of His people.

Wouldn't we be happy if another congregation helped two people to be saved? If they helped someone to love the Lord, wouldn't we rejoice with them? However, this does not mean we should all leave where we are and join that Christian group. We have our commitment from the Lord. What a high, broad, spiritual view Moses had. His desire that all God's people would prophesy matches the apostle Paul's desire, for prophesying builds up the church (1 Cor. 14:4).

### **Not Rebelling**

Moses married an Ethiopian woman. Aaron and Miriam could not handle it and spoke out against him (Num. 12:1). If Joshua had joined them in their rebellion, he possibly would have become the new leader of Israel. Joshua could have said, "Hallelujah! I don't have to be a tent keeper anymore. I will rise up and throw my soldiers behind the revolt. Then I will be the leader!" This was the most dangerous trial Joshua had gone through. However, because of all he had learned, he did not say one word. Joshua trusted his leader and remained submissive. He had learned not to undermine the one who had helped him and raised him up.

There is no record that Joshua reacted at all to Moses' marriage. We also must be so careful concerning God's government. The leaders God has placed among us all have faults, but we must not touch such things. If we pass this test, God may grant us some manifestation, as He did Joshua.

### Sent to Spy Out the Land

The Lord told Moses to choose one man from each tribe to search out the land of Canaan (Num. 13:1–2). In order to take the land, they needed to know what to expect. Joshua was selected to be one of these twelve.

Moses told them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains" (v. 17). Whenever we follow the Lord, we are ascending. The Christian life is always taking us higher. There is no way to progress as a believer and remain at the same spiritual altitude. We may be happy to remain on a plateau, but the Lord is not. His intention is that we would ascend. After we ascend to a new height and feel so glorious, the Lord still says, "Don't stop now! Ascend further!"

When we arrive at the good land, we will have to deal with not only our flesh but also the powers and principalities in the air (Eph. 6:12). This is the nature of the spiritual battle. If we desire to win the victory, we have to gain the high ground. Therefore, we must go up!

Moses told the spies to discover whether the land was good or bad (Num. 13:19). God had already told him it was a land flowing with milk and honey (Exo. 3:8), but Moses wanted them to be impressed by seeing it for themselves. This is a principle. For instance, if parents want their children to go to a certain university, it doesn't work simply to decide for them. The parents should first take them to spy out that campus. It is the same in the Christian life. Even if we know a thing is good, we cannot simply force it upon others; they need to see it for themselves.

## The Report of the Spies

The spies searched through the whole land in forty days, probably walking ten to twenty miles a day. They brought back a cluster of grapes so large that it had to be carried between two men (Num. 13:23–24)! Upon returning, they reported, “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit” (v. 27). While in the land, they also saw the different peoples who inhabited it. Ten of the spies reported, “We saw the giants...and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (v. 33). They saw God’s blessing in the produce of the land, but they didn’t believe that God would help them overcome the giants. Because of this, the children of Israel wept that night (14:1).

For the ten spies to compare themselves to grasshoppers was more serious than if they had said they felt small. Saying they were grasshoppers indicates they felt they were going to be trampled. They saw themselves as hopeless. In fact, they were visionless, like many today. God chose us to live meaningful, purposeful lives, full of vision. We should realize the goal of our lives and fight for the Lord’s interest.

Something happened to the ten spies. They had seen the goodness of the land, but the size of the giants cancelled this out. Therefore, everyone in the congregation lifted up their voice and the people cried together that night. How hopeless! All the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron (Num. 14:2). They forgot how they left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and ate miraculously every day. They forgot the water from the rock. They forgot how God had provided everything they needed. Everything positive they forgot; all they saw now was the discouraging picture painted by the ten spies.

When we go through difficult times, sometimes we forget all our past spiritual enjoyment, growth, and riches. All that we are

able to think about is how defeated we are. At such times, we are like the children of Israel, seeing ourselves as grasshoppers. Although we may have been clear about God's purpose and how the Lord had gained us for it, this seems to have been cancelled out. However, the truth has not changed. What we have gained up to this point is real. Though at times we may see giants, we are still God's children, not grasshoppers. Whatever happens cannot change what has already been constituted into us.

### The Complaint of the Children of Israel

The children of Israel wept and complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!" (Num. 14:2). Complaining exposes a pitiful condition. Those who have the Lord's commitment, who love Him, serve Him, and fight for Him, have no time for complaining. They are occupied with God's interest. The children of Israel were not such people at this point. Instead, out of fear, they complained that their wives and children would become victims (v. 3). Although they prophesied this, God never allowed it to happen.

They also said it would be better to return to Egypt. If they were not going to follow the Lord, it made sense to go back. This, however, God would never allow. Have you ever disagreed so strongly with the direction the Lord was leading you that you wanted to go back to the world? You may have even tried to join your old friends again, but you had no taste anymore for the things they were doing. We can complain, but we cannot go back.

### Rebellion against God

The Israelites threatened to overthrow Moses and replace him with a leader who would take them back to Egypt (Num. 14:4). This threat was so serious that Joshua and Caleb tore their clothing as a sign of their grief and distress. They spoke to all the



people, arguing, “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey’” (vv. 7–8). They were two million strong. The Lord was with them. He had caused water to flow out of the rock, miraculously fed them with manna daily, and defeated their enemies in the wilderness. What were they worried about? Joshua and Caleb told the people, “Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them” (v. 9). Their warning not to rebel against the Lord indicates that their rebellion against Moses was actually rebellion against the Lord.

The Lord intervened, saying, “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me?” (v. 27). The people thought they were complaining against Moses, but in God’s eyes they were complaining against Him; it was He who appointed Moses as leader. I hope we all could learn how serious it is to complain against those who raised us up and served us. They are our life-source.

The Lord continued, “Just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above” (vv. 28–29). That was a severe judgment. The Lord chose to raise up a new generation rather than allow that generation to enter into the good land. Only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter. The children of Israel were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years until the rebellious generation died off.

### **Serving without Complaint**

Joshua was manifested at this time. He stood firmly with God for God’s interest and stood firmly with Moses as God’s appointed

leader. While the others became grasshoppers and forgot their purpose, Joshua and Caleb stood firm. They could say they were on the Lord's side, that they were standing with God, that they trusted God's speaking. They held firm to the vision they had seen, which had become the goal of their service to the Lord.

Joshua had demonstrated his readiness to take the people into the land. However, he remained an attendant to Moses for the entire time they wandered in the wilderness. Being as manifested as he was, this was probably not easy. In fact, this must have become the hardest lesson of all for Joshua. If it had been one of us, could we have done it without complaining? As Moses became older, do you think Joshua ever had the thought, "When will this man die so I can fulfill my destiny?" Ambitious people always think about how they can get to the top. Rarely do we find someone as capable as Joshua who is willing to serve as he did. He continued to learn, and when Moses died, Joshua was able to rise up and say, "Let us go and take the land."

# 4

## The Goal of Serving

The book of Joshua complements the New Testament book of Ephesians, which stresses God’s desire for an inheritance for both Himself and His people (1:14, 18). The parallel to this in Joshua is Israel’s struggle for the good land, which was to become their inheritance. Ephesians tells us that we are not wrestling “against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...in the heavenly places” (6:12). In Joshua, the struggle to gain the land was against the Gentile tribes (Josh. 3:10) who represent these principalities and powers.

### God’s Inheritance and Good Pleasure

Ephesians shows us that the Triune God has an eternal purpose focused upon gaining a glorious inheritance in His people (1:9–14, 18). This inheritance is His heart’s desire. It matches Him and becomes His expression. God wants to become our inheritance and wants to make us His inheritance. He became a man to match us. Now He wants us to match Him. He is glorious; He needs a counterpart to express His glory.

Ephesians 1 tells us that God the Father chose us and predestined us to become inheriting sons (vv. 3–6), God the Son redeemed us and brought us into that inheritance (vv. 7–12), and God the Spirit became our seal to guarantee our inheritance (vv. 13–14). Furthermore, God desires to make known to us

“the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself” (1:9). God has a purpose. This purpose is His good pleasure. That is why He is so happy whenever we enter into His purpose.

We may take pleasure in music, studies, or being naughty, but these are all temporary. God has an eternal pleasure, and this pleasure involves us. In eternity He will still take pleasure in us. The Father never tires of the Son; neither does He tire of us in Him. Together we become His pleasure which He purposed in Himself.

My grandchildren are my heart’s good pleasure. When I see them, I am so satisfied. In the same manner, nothing brings greater satisfaction to the heart of our Father than to see His glorious inheritance in His many sons.

### Headed Up in Christ

God’s desire is to gather together in one—or head up—all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10, 22). This is His pleasure. It grieves Him when we are not headed up in Christ. It seems that the Lord who created the heavens and earth and can conquer any obstacle in His way cannot conquer us. We who are His satisfaction are also His frustration because we rarely allow Him to head us up in all things.

Sometimes we tell the Lord that we belong to Him because He died for us, but that is not what is meant by being headed up. That is only the beginning. It only changes our position so the Lord can begin to head us up. We are predestined by the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). He wants to head us up so He can inherit us.

It is my dream to be inherited by the Lord, so I come to the Lord and tell Him, “I give all I have to You.” However, I eventually learn that much of what I have the Lord cannot take as His inheritance. In fact, the Lord cannot even take me! He loves me,

cares for me, and works with me, but He desires that I “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Then I will perfectly match Christ and become God’s inheritance.

### **The Glory of God’s Inheritance in the Saints**

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” How glorious the Lord’s inheritance is! Other than the Lord Himself, nothing can match it for glory.

Even the glory of kings, queens, and presidents cannot compare to the riches of the glory the Lord is gaining in His believers. God is a God of glory (Acts 7:2), and what He desires is His glorious inheritance in the saints. When we see the church, we see God’s workmanship, God’s masterpiece (Eph. 2:10). The church is filled with the riches of God’s glory.

### **The Whole Armor of God**

This is what God desires, but it will not be accomplished without a fight. This is why Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the whole armor of God (vv. 11–17). The armor of God enables us to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). To put on the armor of God practically means to put on the church life. We should not say that the Lord Jesus alone is our armor, for we cannot divide the body of Christ from Christ (Rom. 12:4–5). Christ and Christ’s body are one (1 Cor. 12:12). In this one entity we can put on Christ. When we put on Christ, we put on the body of Christ; when we put on the body of Christ, we put on all the members of the new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; cf. 1 Cor. 12:15–26). Every member needs to put on the other members, and altogether we need to put on Christ (Rom. 13:12–14).

## Wrestling against the Authority in the Air

Ephesians 6 continues, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (v. 12). We are not fighting with flesh and blood. That would actually be much easier. We are fighting against principalities, powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this age.

Look how dark the world is: “The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). Even the news media, which we would hope to be balanced, is biased. Don’t think there is justice—everything in the world is under the authority of the air. Yet even under this present darkness, God desires to raise up His testimony, His inheritance. When He gains His inheritance, He is joyful and satisfied. For this reason, it is a true service to God when we wrestle against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This is the spiritual warfare we are fighting. Therefore, we have to put on the whole armor of God. Put on your local church life; put on the body of Christ. Love Jesus, and love your fellow believers. Give yourself to Jesus, and give yourself to your brothers and sisters. When you are living such a life, you live under its covering and protection.

## The Stratagems of the Devil

Do we realize there are powers in the air that use the earthly organizations around us? Even the places we shop are under their influence. When we walk into a store, we are walking right into one of Satan’s traps. We all have to live on this earth, but when we walk into a mall, we shouldn’t become his prey. Remember, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). We

must maintain a sober mind and be clear in the Lord's presence. While we shop, we should realize we are touring the realm of the satanic rulers and principalities. We are not here to be devoured by them; we are here to wrestle them!

If one of the enemy's traps doesn't entice you, the authorities of the air will find other avenues. A friend may say, "I'm going to a sale. Can you come with me?" Why does this happen? Because the rulers have begun to work. Then, if you agree to go, your friend may say, "Look at that! It's seventy percent off! Don't give up this golden opportunity." You are compelled to surrender and make a purchase. From that day, you find you don't need someone to invite you again. You begin to look for sales and go by yourself. Without even realizing it, you have become a "shopaholic."

One day while shopping, I met a man holding a very tiny baby and asked him how old the baby was. He replied that it was less than twenty-four hours old! His wife was a genuine shopaholic—just after delivering the baby, her first thought was to go shopping! She had been captured by the rulers of the darkness of this age.

The powers of the air and the earthly organizations work together to entrap us. If we don't go along, they will try other things to gather us in. The powers will intensify their offerings to make them more attractive. They may entice us with entertainment or relaxation, attempting to get us to do something we wouldn't have done otherwise, in order to snare us (2 Tim. 2:26).

### **Arise, Go Over This Jordan**

Before Moses died, Joshua was appointed by God to serve in his place (Num. 27: 12–23; Deut. 31:7). Joshua, however, continued as Moses' attendant until Moses died. After he was taken, God told Joshua, "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” (Josh. 1:2).

I can imagine Joshua, before Moses died, looking over the Jordan and thinking, “We have to go over and take this land because this is the good land God has promised us.” He would go to Moses, who would say, “Let’s pray.” Sometime later he might have spoken to Moses again about this, and again Moses would have said, “Let’s pray.” Joshua was a spiritual man, so he would not have murmured or grumbled. He wouldn’t have tried to find a way around Moses since he was always one with him.

Joshua waited patiently. In fact, he had been waiting a very long time. When he came back from spying out the land, he had said, “Let’s go in and take the land!” But the people and Moses and even God said no. Joshua had to wait until that generation passed away, and the next one was ready. Now, after Moses’ death, God said to Joshua, “Arise, go over this Jordan!”

Perhaps if we heard God’s word, “Arise,” after nearly forty years of waiting, we might have replied, “Huh? Arise for what?” Yet Joshua was so clear. During all those years of waiting, Joshua watched Moses and learned of him. When following spiritual leaders, we should simply receive all that they can give us, adding to what we already have. This is how our service to the Lord becomes richer. Moses was a special vessel (Deut. 34:10), so Joshua could not go beyond him, but Joshua endeavored to receive everything he could from him. God then told Joshua, “Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people....Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses” (Josh. 1:2–3).

### An Aggressive Attitude

What was physically true for the children of Israel is spiritually true for us today. Israel shrunk back from taking the good land for fear of the giants in the land. We shrink back also, not realizing how much the Lord could use us. If we would walk as



pioneers with an aggressive attitude to take the land, then Christ's unsearchable riches will be our reality, and we will become His inheritance with glory. It is all according to how far we want to go.

We tend, however, to be negotiators. We equivocate. If we say, "Lord, I will give You Monday and Thursday," then our blessing will be Monday and Thursday, but not the rest of the week. Due to this compromise, we refuse to walk through the whole land. However, every place that the sole of our foot treads upon belongs to us. Our attitude should be, "I want to explore Christ! I want to develop the Christ who is in me! I want to be in the divine Word! I want to have a living Christ! I want Christ to govern me day by day!" In every instant and every situation He must be our Lord.

We may read these verses as, "Every place that my eyes observe or that I think about, the Lord has given me." No! The Lord says, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you" (Josh. 1:3). Why do our feet have to do the work? Why can't we let our eyes or mind do it? It is because only when we walk in Christ (Col. 2:6) do we realize He is so marvelous, rich, faithful, and exalted.

### Walking in Christ

Therefore, the basic thought of wrestling against the rulers of this world is that we walk. God would tell us, just as He told Joshua, "Go over this Jordan....Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you." Only God can make that promise. The world tries its best to buy people, but it doesn't have much to offer. Your company may promise to promote you. God, however, offers us Christ!

I marvel at the foolishness of some Christians. There is so much God has given them in Christ, yet they forget Christ in their daily concerns. They are consumed with working toward a degree or seeking a job. They worry that even though they have

sent off so many résumés, still no one has hired them. When I pray for such ones, I pray that in the midst of their job search they would love the Lord, love the church, consecrate themselves to Jesus Christ and nothing else, and that they would wrestle the evil powers for the sake of the Lord's kingdom by walking in Christ.

How glorious is such a life! It is immeasurably better than moaning about not having a job or being happy about having one. Every day thousands of people lose a job or gain one. I have loved the Lord Jesus for fifty-four years, and there has not been one period of time the Lord failed me. Everything on this globe can disappoint, but for the believer, Jesus is always precious and sweet. What a life! This is why I can be happy even in the midst all kinds of turmoil. I may have tears, but within me is the assurance that there is One worthy of my trust. There is more of Christ to be gained in every challenge, so rise up and walk in Him!

### God's Encouragement and Provision

The Lord encouraged Joshua by reminding him of the extent of the land He had promised to Israel as an inheritance (Josh 1:4). If we feel weak and discouraged, it is probably because we have forgotten the glorious inheritance God has promised. We are called to fight for what is on God's heart.

The Lord further encouraged Joshua by telling him, "I will not leave you nor forsake you. 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" (vv. 5–6). This land represents our inheritance. Once we see this inheritance, we will say, "I am so happy that God will not leave me nor forsake me. I can be strong and of good courage!"

God repeats again to Joshua that he had to be strong and very courageous in order that he might observe the laws He had given through Moses, not turning to the left or the right (v. 7). These

laws are God's words. Today, these words are the Bible. When we have His Word and we abide in it, we can rise up and take the land.

God goes on to say, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage" (v. 9). It seems as though God was worried that Joshua might have been thinking, "If Moses couldn't make it, how could I?" The Lord seemed to be telling Joshua, "I love and respect My servant Moses, but you must come out from under his shadow. Be strong and of good courage and go your way!"

Many servants of the Lord have gone before us. Now the Lord is calling us to serve Him. Therefore, we should be strong and of good courage. We should not be afraid or dismayed. We may be worried about the details of our future, but the Lord tells us, "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (v. 9).

When my wife and I moved to Akron, Ohio, I felt called to serve the Lord. For this reason I was very specific in my prayers concerning our housing. I wanted a house that would allow me to serve the Lord with the least distraction. I asked the Lord for a house close to the church's meeting hall, with three bedrooms upstairs so the first floor could be used for fellowship, set back from the street so it wouldn't be too noisy, with a small backyard so I wouldn't have much to mow, in good condition since I am not a handyman, and low cost since I didn't have much money. After I prayed, I was very restful. Soon my real estate agent called and said, "Mr. Chu, your God has prepared a house for you!" There had been a fire, so the house had been repainted and recarpeted. It was a three-bedroom, two-story house. He said, "There is one drawback...the backyard is very small." Everything was exactly as I had prayed. I thanked the Lord as the One who is so alive! Every time I looked at that house, I was looking at a miracle. The Lord is so trustworthy! When He said, "Be strong and of good courage," He also said, "I will be with you."

## Fighting in Oneness for God's Testimony

Joshua reminded the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that when they asked Moses for the land to the east of the Jordan as their inheritance, he had them promise to fight alongside the rest of the tribes until all had acquired their inheritance (Josh. 1:12–15). Joshua was simple. His attitude was that the twelve tribes fought as one army. As long as some had not yet laid claim to their inheritance, they would all fight for them. Isn't that glorious? They all fought together for the Lord's testimony.

This is a good principle for us to follow today. If one church is in need, it is too easy for those in another church to say, "We cannot afford to send anyone, for our number is too small." However, if they stay and do not help in the fighting, their own church may suffer loss. If, however, they go, the Lord will gain the glory.

If every church is only for itself, then no church can prevail. How foolish it is for churches to compete for members. It is a problem when we only care for our own church. We must fight for the one testimony to take the one inheritance. Travel to visit other churches. We shouldn't be for our church alone. This is the principle Joshua stood upon. Yes, you found your home and your land, but don't be for your "tribe" alone. Rise up in fellowship with all the "tribes" to take the land.

# 5

## Serving by Following God's Lead

Joshua had been prepared and trained by the Lord. After the death of Moses, Joshua was ready to serve in his place. The children of Israel were now ready to cross the Jordan, enter the good land, and confront their enemies. Their first three confrontations would be with Jericho, Ai, and Gibeon. In each case, Joshua had to learn to follow the Lord, the true leader of His people.

### God Taking the Lead

To begin the fight for the good land, Israel had to cross the Jordan. The order in which they crossed reveals God's desire to lead them in all that would follow. Joshua told the people, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan" (Josh. 3:11). The first to enter the river was the ark carried by the priests. This caused the water to stop and rise up in a heap, giving adequate room for all the children of Israel to pass over easily (Josh. 3:14–16).

The battle to gain the land was both for the Lord and for the Israelites. As long as God achieved what He intended, Israel would also. This is equally true of us (Matt. 6:33). The first thing we need in fighting the enemy is to allow God to lead. If God leads and we are with Him, then surely the battle is won.

## Two Memorials

The Lord told Joshua to have twelve men, one from each tribe, pick up twelve stones from the river where the priests who were holding the ark stood and to bring them to the shore (Josh. 4:1–3). The stones were brought out of the river to be a testimony at Gilgal. Then Joshua set up another twelve stones in the dry riverbed where the priests bearing the ark were standing (v. 9). Thus, there were to be two memorials of twelve stones each. Once the priests bearing the ark came up out of the riverbed, the water returned.

### Experiencing Death and Resurrection

Our experience of this is expressed by Paul: “We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). We should experience death and burial, represented by the stones set up in the riverbed. We should also experience resurrection, represented by the stones brought out of the river and set up in Gilgal. Baptism is a symbol of both burial and resurrection (Col. 2:12). Being placed in the water indicates being buried, and coming out of the water indicates being brought into resurrection. When it comes to the spiritual warfare to gain Christ as our good land, however, resurrection is first, then death (Phil. 3:10).

We like to do what we want, to be in control, but we are limited by the church life. We like to be free, but do we realize that we are spiritual stones? Crossing the Jordan indicates we have entered into resurrection, typified by the stones taken from the riverbed. Yet we are also represented by the other group of stones which were left to be buried in the river.

This is why we sometimes complain. Even as we are in resurrection, we experience death under the limitations in the church

life. I have loved and served the Lord for many years, and during this time I have always experienced the Lord's resurrection. During these same years I have also experienced being buried under the Jordan's death waters. I die for the sake of the Lord's testimony. I am able to declare, "Praise the Lord, I am in resurrection!" even as I am able to declare, "Praise the Lord, I am buried with Christ!"

Things take place in the church life that are not according to our way. No one likes to live in such a situation, yet because we are not independent stones, we have no choice. God, in His wisdom, had the twelve stones taken from the river and placed on the side of Gilgal. At the same time, twelve stones were set up in the Jordan as a reminder that the process we are in involves not only resurrection but also death and burial.

Without this death and burial, there is no readiness to declare that we are here to serve the Lord for His testimony, especially when things do not go our way. For the testimony's sake we not only serve in resurrection but also allow ourselves to undergo burial. This aspect of the church life cannot be received by everyone.

For instance, some Christians I know are extremely talented musicians. If one of them heard of an opening in an orchestra but felt it was not the Lord's leading to take it, would that person still seek the position or deny himself for Christ? To be in resurrection is not difficult—we just enjoy it. To be in death, however, we need the church to stand with us. This is the reason Joshua set up the twelve stones in the river.

If we have not experienced death, we have not yet crossed the Jordan but are running around on the far shore. Yet if the Lord is to have His testimony in the church life, our flesh and soul must be dealt with. Therefore, in the church life we must always experience death. All those with a heart for the Lord want to be in resurrection but often forget that death and

resurrection go together. The church life must be of the Spirit, not of the flesh or the soul.

We are not in resurrection to have our way; we are in resurrection to fight for the Lord's interest. Merely to have come out of the Jordan in resurrection does not mean we have accomplished what the Lord is after. Once Israel crossed the Jordan, there were battles to be fought and won before the Lord's testimony could be established in the land. For this, Joshua would have to put to death his own way of leading Israel and follow the Lord's lead in resurrection to fight the battles for the land.

### The Commander of the Army of the Lord

While Israel was camped in Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, Joshua met a Man with a sword in his hand (Josh. 5:13). Joshua asked Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" The Man indicated that He was neither for them nor for their adversaries, saying, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come" (v. 14).

This Man was the messenger God said He would send ahead of them (Exo. 33:2). He was the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not follow any particular side among men; we follow Jesus Christ! Those who follow a man will change from one camp to another depending upon whichever side is profitable to them. The Lord told Joshua He was not on either side. He was there to take charge.

Christians like to tell the Lord that He must be on their side even when those on the other side are their fellow believers. However, the Lord is not on this side or that side. He requires that we all be on His side.

### Three Confrontations

The children of Israel are finally at the point they are ready to fight for the land. This fight is of three categories represented by three cities. The first, Jericho, represents Satan and the prin-



cipalities and powers of the air; the second, Ai, represents the world; and the third, Gibeon, represents fallen man. These three characterize the entire cosmos.

To bring His people into their promised inheritance, God had to take care of these three things: He had to destroy the power of the enemy; He had to deal with the world; and He had to take care of man. We will continually confront these three matters throughout our entire life.

### Jericho—Satan's Kingdom

Jericho, which means *fragrant* (Strong), signifies Satan and his authority in the air. Satan surely presents himself as a fragrant, attractive person. He was created in beauty (Ezek. 28:13). When he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11), I have no doubt he appeared to be more beautiful than Jesus (cf. Isa. 53:2). The first city the Israelites had to defeat was Jericho, which represented Satan's kingdom. Jericho must have been a fragrant, attractive city. To those caught in Satan's kingdom, it is so attractive it seems a shame to destroy it. For instance, shopping malls draw thousands of shoppers every day, yet they are a part of Satan's kingdom.

The stronger influence of Jericho, however, is not found in shopping malls but in chapels and cathedrals, because religion is the main thing that Satan uses to control mankind. Recent news stories indicate that because radical Muslims are willing to die for their religion, there has been an upsurge in converts to Islam. Many people desire God and want to be satisfied with Him, but they don't find Christ. Many who do find Christ are quickly channeled into a religion.

Religion brings a false sense of security, causing people to feel they are acceptable to God. They do not realize that religion actually takes them away from God in the name of God. This is why religion is worse than sin, for people know that sin is

wrong, but they have no idea that religion is also part of Satan's kingdom. People should be following Christ rather than merely belonging to a religion.

The church in Laodicea claimed, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 2:17), yet the Lord stood outside and told them, "I stand at the door and knock" (v. 20). A church may feel it is rich in its Christian heritage when, in fact, Christ has been shut out.

### God's Strategy against Jericho

God's way to overcome Jericho was very simple (Josh. 6:2–5). He instructed Joshua to march around the city with all the men of war once a day for six days. Seven priests were to walk before the ark of the covenant bearing trumpets of rams' horns. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times, after which they were to blow the trumpets and give a great shout. Then, when the walls of the city fell down flat, the people were to go into the city to take it. Surely this was the strangest military tactic ever used for any battle in the history of the world!

In order for us to fight the battle against the principalities and powers of the air today, we must understand God's strategy. First, we have to fight in the body, not alone, just as Israel went out to battle together. Second, we battle under the covering of the blood, declaring victory in the blood of Jesus. This is represented by the seven trumpets of ram's horns borne by seven priests (cf. Lev. 25:9).

Satan is a very subtle enemy. He tells us how wonderful we are. Instead of "Hallelujah," we begin to think, "Hallelu-me!" With one simple trick, he has caused us to leave our stand as members in the body and get swept away with sinful pride. We need to blow our trumpet of ram's horn, declaring we are saved by the blood of the Lord. In this way, we gain the victory (Rev. 12:11).

When we fail, Satan will say, “How can the Lord love a sinner like you?” We don’t need to argue back but just be in the church life and march with the believers against Satan’s kingdom declaring, “Hallelujah, I am saved by the blood of the Lamb!” Then we have to tell Satan, “Yes, I am a sinner. Yes, I was defeated. Yes, I failed. Yes, I am terrible. But I am here because Jesus is my Savior!” That is the blowing of the trumpets. By following the battle plan given by God to Joshua, they overcame Jericho.

### **Ai—The Enticing World**

The second city that Israel battled was Ai (Josh. 7). When Joshua and the children of Israel came to this city, they forgot to seek the Lord. They spied it out and concluded that a few thousand men could take it. When they went to battle, thirty-six of their men were killed and Israel’s army took flight.

This was not a small thing. The Lord had always given them the victory. At Jericho, the enemy’s defenses had crumbled before them. At Ai, however, they were routed by the enemy. Why? While battling the powers of the air (Jericho), we need a bold declaration. As we shall see, however, in battling the world (Ai), we need a clear separation from the world.

After this defeat, Joshua and the elders of Israel sought the Lord and He answered them, “Israel has sinned...for they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived” (Josh. 7:11). A young man named Achan had disobeyed Joshua’s warning to abstain from the accursed things of Jericho (6:18) and had picked up a beautiful Babylonian garment from the spoils of that city. Babylon is associated with religion and idol worship. Achan also picked up some silver, typifying Christ’s redemption, and gold, which typifies God’s nature. He picked up something of God and something of the world. When the Israelites realized this, they stoned Achan and burned all his things. Be very careful. Don’t bring the world into the

church life. If you do, the world will eventually conquer you. It starts out with something seemingly small, but eventually it opens the door for the world to invade.

After Israel dealt with the sin among them, the Lord told Joshua to set an ambush behind Ai (Josh. 8:1–2). Israel went out against Ai a second time and won the victory.

### Gibeon—The Deceptiveness of Man

We fight first with the principalities in the air (Jericho) and then with the enticing world (Ai). The hardest thing to deal with, however, is not Jericho or Ai but Gibeon, which typifies the deceptiveness of man. Men of Gibeon came to the Israelites pretending to have come from a long distance (Josh. 9). Joshua made a covenant with Gibeon without first seeking counsel of God. If he had asked, the Lord certainly would have indicated that these were actually neighbors who should have been dispossessed of the land.

Though we may be cheated by man, God can use our mistakes to gain a victory. Joshua failed by not seeking God before making a covenant with the Gibeonites. This covenant forced him to come to Gibeon's defense when it was attacked by five kings of the Amorites (Josh. 10:1–7). In turn, the Lord used this as an opportunity to perform one of the greatest miracles in the Bible—He prolonged the day so Joshua could win the victory (vv. 12–13).

We may make mistakes, but if we are for the Lord, He can use our wrong decisions for His glory. This was the experience of Joshua. His heart was for the Lord and His plan for His people. Thus, even when he did fail, God used it to glorify Himself through a miraculous victory over the five Amorite kings.

### A Life of Service

A mature leader is one who has learned to serve by follow-

ing the Lord's lead and giving Him the first place. At this point in Joshua's life, he had learned this lesson. He ruled Israel by giving the Lord the preeminence. His was a life of service to God, bringing His people into their God-given inheritance.

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