

Old Testament Survey - Part 25

by Dick Woodward

This sermon explores the book of Joshua, emphasizing the importance of faith and obedience in claiming our spiritual blessings.

Duration: 27:19

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

The sermon delves into the book of Joshua, contrasting it with the book of Numbers to highlight the importance of faith in possessing spiritual blessings. It emphasizes the need for believers to move from salvation to experiencing God's full blessings through faith and obedience. The sermon draws parallels between Joshua's leadership and Jesus as the ultimate Savior and leader, encouraging believers to step into their spiritual Canaan by understanding and applying faith. Various New Testament verses are referenced to illustrate the concept of possessing spiritual blessings through faith.

Transcript

We continue our survey of the Old Testament at this time by coming to the first of the historical books, the book of Joshua. In our last session, we set some perspective on Hebrew history and why it's important that we should study Hebrew history or why we should study history at all. But now as we come to the first of these history books, we want to set perspective on this first history book, the book of Joshua.

The book of Joshua in some ways is the antithesis of the book of Numbers, just the opposite of the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers was one great big illustration of unbelief. The book of Numbers tells us that they did not enter into the promised land of God's blessing because of their unbelief.

The book of Numbers told us and illustrated for us unbelief in the life of a believer, if that's not too much of a contradiction in terms, and the awesome consequences that can come from that. Those people in the book of Numbers believed enough to be delivered from Egypt, but they did not believe enough to enter into the promised land of God's blessing. And that's a picture of so many professing Christians today who believe enough to be saved from their sins, their spiritual Egypt, but they do not have that kind of faith that can take them across the River Jordan and into the land of Canaan, where God's blessing will be upon them, because they have the faith to claim and receive all that God has for them.

The theme or the devotional message of the book of Joshua is, Possess your spiritual possessions. The author of the book is Joshua, of course, and Joshua is the assistant or the understudy to this great man of God, Moses. Moses does succeed in training a successor, and that's why the people have such victory under the leadership of Joshua.

Moses did a superb job of training Joshua and reproducing himself by training Joshua. This happens all the way through the scripture. Elijah trains Elisha, Jeremiah will have his understudies among the other prophets, and when we get to the New Testament, we see Jesus deputizing and reproducing himself by training the Twelve Apostles, and the Apostle Paul has his Timothy, and we see this in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

When this doesn't happen, the consequences again are awesome. But it does happen here at the beginning of the Bible when we see the transition from the law books to the history books, we also see a transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The name of Joshua is the same as the name Jesus.

Jesus is the way you say it in Greek, Joshua, or Yeshua, is the way you say it in Hebrew. We probably all know that the name Jesus means Savior, or Jehovah saves, and that's what Joshua means. So in his name, this great leader is a type of Christ.

He's also a type of Christ in terms of his ministry. I believe Moses, as the great deliverer, is a type of Christ as the deliverer. But Joshua is a type of Christ as the Lord, who not only saves us as our Savior or deliverer, but leads us into the promised land of spiritual blessing.

It would seem that the key word in experiencing salvation or deliverance from our spiritual Egypt is the word believe, but the key word to entering into the promised land of God's spiritual blessing is the word obey. In a sense, we're talking about faith when we talk about obedience, if we understand the word faith. The word faith means commitment, the kind of commitment that obeys.

Joshua is 40 years old at the time of the Exodus. He and Caleb were the only two survivors, remember, of the wilderness wanderings, because they had the favorable report when they were sent in as spies, and God reckoned their faith, much like he did Abraham's faith, as something that was worthy of their survival. But Joshua is 80 years old when he receives his commission to lead the people of God into the land of Canaan and conquer the seven nations that are defending that land and are stronger than the Israelis.

He's 110 years old when he dies, having demonstrated a character of strength, fidelity, leadership, military genius, but above all, a great faith. He was not commissioned like Moses was at a burning bush, and he did not get his commission directly from God. He received his commission from an old man who knew God and who knew Joshua.

The old man, of course, was Moses. We see a transition that's important as we come into the leadership of Joshua. Moses received the word of God on Mount Sinai directly from God, just as he received his commission at the burning bush directly from God.

But now we're told that Joshua is exhorted to take the written word, the word that has already been given by God through Moses, and he, like the kings of Israel who are to follow him, is supposed to meditate upon that word and think about that word day and night. Remember, Moses specified in Deuteronomy 20 that their kings should do this, and this doesn't begin with the kings, it begins with Joshua. Joshua is told, as he assumes the leadership, that he must obey these commandments of God, and he's to take these

written commandments of God and think about them every day and every night.

Now, as we said, the devotional message of Joshua is, Possess your spiritual possessions. When God gave the land of Canaan to the people of Israel, actually he promised it to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The title or the ownership to the land of Canaan was unconditional.

He gave it to them unconditionally, but the conquest and the possession of that land was very conditional. This, of course, as we keep insisting upon or emphasizing the devotional application to the book of Joshua, this is a picture of our spiritual blessings as believers. God gives us all the spiritual blessings we need when we come into faith in Christ.

Our title to those spiritual blessings is unconditional, but our possession of those spiritual blessings, our actual conquest of those spiritual blessings, is very conditional. This is pictured for us in the key verse in the book of Joshua. Joshua 1, verse 3 gives us a definitive verse for the book of Joshua.

All of these books have a definitive verse or a definitive chapter, a verse or a chapter that kind of tells us what the book is all about. Here is the key or the definitive verse in the book of Joshua. Just as they are about to cross the River Jordan and invade Canaan, this is what they are told.

Verse 3, "...every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." The whole land had been given to them, and in terms of ownership they had it all. But in terms of possession, here was the law of possession. Every square foot of the land of Canaan that you set your foot upon, that's what I've given to you in terms of possession.

That and no more, that and no less. Now again, the application is, that's the way it is with our spiritual blessings. We have spiritual blessings like prayer, the scripture itself, fellowship, worship, the joy of ministering and being part of God's solution as the great work of God is done through us.

There are many spiritual blessings that are available to us. God gives them all to every believer, but some believers possess those spiritual blessings and some do not. The key is very practical.

You have to set your foot upon them, and one square foot at a time you possess your spiritual possessions or your spiritual blessings. Now many people feel that the content of the book of Joshua is so much referred to in the first five books of the Bible that many scholars say, this book of Joshua should really go with the first five books of the Bible. The first five books of the Bible are called the Pentateuch, which is the name that's given to them because there are five books in the set of the first five law books.

But some say that since the law books refer so much to this business of entering the promised land and Joshua takes us into the promised land, that the content of the book belongs with the Pentateuch, and so they say you should put Joshua with the first five books of the Bible and call it a hexateuch. If you had this hexateuch, these first six books of the Bible, these first six books of the Bible would present again an allegory of salvation in this beautiful way. In Genesis you have the seeds or sources of salvation.

In Exodus you have the deliverance from the penalty and power of sin through the blood of the Passover lamb and the power of a miracle-working God. That's what Exodus pictures. Leviticus pictures the immediate purpose of that kind of salvation, which is to worship the God who saved you or delivered you.

Deuteronomy, though, begins to take us into the second half of the hexateuch. Deuteronomy is filled with exhortations exhorting us, cross the River Jordan and go into the promised land. When you get into the

promised land, possess every spiritual possession, experience every spiritual blessing that God has planned for you.

The book of Numbers was that awesome negative illustration of the fact that a whole generation of the people of God did not do that. So we had the death of a generation because of their unbelief. But Joshua, as we say, is the antithesis of the book of Numbers.

The book of Numbers is one great big illustration of unbelief, whereas the book of Joshua is one great big illustration of faith. The book of Joshua says, by faith you can possess all of your spiritual possessions. As we continue to emphasize the devotional application, there are several verses of scripture in the New Testament that I think present to us by application a beautiful picture of what the Old Testament book of Joshua is picturing for us when it tells us about the land of Canaan, the promised land.

Many scholars say that the book of Ephesians in the New Testament is to the New Testament what the book of Joshua is to the Old Testament. The book of Ephesians is telling us about the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, and it tells us that it's possible for us to enter into Christ and possess all of those spiritual possessions, experience all of those spiritual blessings. In the New Testament so often you have the teaching, in the Old Testament you have the illustration.

God gives us the illustration first, then he gives us the fine print, which is like the fine print under the picture. When you read the book of Joshua, you're reading about this. By faith you can get it all.

You can just go into the promised land of God's blessing and experience everything God planned for you to experience as a believer. When you get to the book of Ephesians, it kind of tells you in greater depth what that means. For instance, the key verse to the book of Ephesians is also the third verse of the first chapter.

It's easy to remember these two scripture references. Joshua 1.3 is the key verse to Joshua, and Ephesians 1.3 is the key verse to Ephesians. Ephesians 1.3 says this, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That is a wonderful verse of scripture.

It's telling us several things. First of all, it's picturing the promised land this way. In the New Testament, the promised land is the heavenly place.

When Jesus stayed up all night with that rabbi, Nicodemus, he talked to Nicodemus about being born again, and Nicodemus didn't understand him. Jesus seemed a little put out with this rabbi, because he couldn't understand that common ordinary earthly illustration. At one point he said to Nicodemus, all Nicodemus could say was, "How? How? How can these things be?" So at one point Jesus said to him, "What would you do if I told you something really spiritual like this? Nobody's ever gone up to heaven but me.

Nobody's ever come down from heaven but me. And nobody is in heaven but me." And he's looking him right in the eye. He says, "I'm in heaven," but he's looking him right in the eye when he says that." Now Nicodemus didn't even say, "How?" when Jesus ran that one by him.

But what Jesus was teaching, of course, is this. Heaven is not only a place, he tells us in the Upper Room Discourse it's a place, definitely it's a place, but heaven is not just a place that we're going to go after we die and be with Jesus for all eternity in the eternal dimension. Heaven is a spiritual dimension in which we

can dwell right now.

There is such a thing as a heavenly spiritual dimension, and you can actually dwell in that spiritual dimension right now. That's what Paul means in Ephesians 1.3 when he says, "God has all these spiritual blessings he's given us, but you have to come and get them.' You know where they are? Well, in the book of Joshua, they're in the Promised Land. You have to go into the Promised Land to possess them.

In the book of Ephesians, they're in Christ. They're in the heavenly place in Christ. And if you want to possess these spiritual possessions in Ephesians 1.3, you have to come into Christ, into the heavenly place, because that's where they all are.

And by faith, you can be in Christ, you can be in the heavenly dimension. Peter talks about the Promised Land in these words, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." This is a wonderful verse. Peter couldn't even read or write, and so Peter's emphasis was upon knowing God.

Notice in the letters of Peter, he always talks to you about knowing God. He's just an old man who knows God. He's not a scholar.

They say when Paul and Luke got together, Peter took a walk, because Peter just wasn't a scholar like those men were. But Peter was a spiritual giant, he knew God. He tells us in his verse, which is 2 Peter 1.3, all these verses seem to be 1.3, Peter says that the divine power of God has given to us, and notice this is a fact, he already has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, all the things we need to live a godly life.

He's already given them to us through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Again, the same truth is taught. God has given you everything you need to live a godly life, and in order to get these things you need to live a godly life, you have to come and know God, come and relate yourself to God.

But here again is the emphasis. He's given you everything you need. In the book of James, the Apostle James says that we have not because we ask not.

If it's true that God has given us all spiritual blessings, that he's given us our spiritual land of kingdom without conditions, we own it all, we have the title to it all, why is it that we don't have more spiritual blessings? Well, James says it's because we don't ask. And that's another way of saying what these verses all say and what the book of Joshua will say over and over again about 16 times, it's because we don't believe. If they're all there and we don't ask for them, why don't we ask? It's because we don't believe.

That has to be the reason why we don't ask. I heard a story once about a preacher that went to heaven and St. Peter met him there and said, Oh, you're Pastor so-and-so, he said, I'd like to take you on a tour. And with a twinkle in his eye, Peter takes this old pastor on a tour of heaven.

As they're touring heaven, the pastor says, What are those big boxes over there, those long narrow boxes? And Peter says, Remember back there in 67 when you desperately needed pews for your church? Well, we had them all crated up ready to ship and you never asked for them. So there they are. And as they walk on a little further, here's a great big crate, great big box.

And the preacher says, What's that thing? And Peter says, Well, in 71 you needed an organ, remember? And we had the thing all crated and boxed and ready to ship, but you never asked for it. So there it is. And the tour continues.

You have not because you ask not. Peter says we have it all. Paul says we have it all.

Well, then why don't we actually possess it all? It's because we apparently do not understand faith. We don't understand this bridge of faith that bridges the gap between all that God has given us and our ability to apply it, to implement it, to appropriate it, to claim it. And that's why God has given us the book of Joshua.

In the book of Joshua we find about 16 great illustrations of faith. When God wanted us to know about faith back there in the book of Genesis, he gave us about 10 or 12 chapters telling us about the man Abraham. Faith is so important, God said, You've just got to know about this man Abraham.

And he gives us more chapters telling us about Abraham than he gave us telling us about the history of the universe and the earth and the man and woman and all the history of civilization and all these things that we think are so important. God spends twice as much space in the scripture telling us about Abraham than he does about all that because we need to know about faith. Now he isn't through with that subject yet.

When we come to the book of Joshua, here's a whole book, and he gives us 16 major illustrations in this book, and they all tell us the same thing, what faith is and how faith works. Because faith is the key. You have it all.

You have the spiritual land of Canaan, but you're not possessing it. That's because you don't understand faith, apparently. Now the Apostle Paul gives us a great verse.

He pictures Canaan this way. In 2 Corinthians 9.8, the Apostle Paul says, God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work. Did you notice the superlatives in that verse, the great number of superlatives in that verse? God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you always, having all sufficiency in all things, might abound unto every good work.

What that's talking about is grace. The word grace in the Greek is the word *keres*. It's the blessing and favor of God that we don't deserve.

It comes in many forms. It comes in the form of the power of God, the dynamic to live a godly life. This word grace is a good picture of the promised land and our spiritual blessings.

When grace is working in your life, when you have the faith to appropriate it, it's *keresma*, or *keresmata*. Grace, what an important word this is, what an important concept this is. This verse says, God is able to make all grace abound toward you, not just a little bit of grace trickle in your direction.

He's able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you, all the time, having all the sufficiency that you need for all things, might abound to every good work. All *keresma*, all grace, all sufficiency, all things, always, all of us. That's what Paul says.

Again, if that's true, why is it that we're not abounding unto every good work and always finding God's sufficiency for everything? I had lunch with a man one day, and I said to him, how are you today? He answered me the way he always did, he said, great, wonderful, marvelous, tremendous. I was getting a little tired of him responding that way every time I asked him how he felt, because it was a Monday, and I hadn't had a very good Sunday, and I wasn't feeling great, wonderful, marvelous, and tremendous. So I said to him, if you weren't feeling great, wonderful, marvelous, and tremendous, how would you have answered my question? He said, I would have lied to you.

I said, well, tell me, how is it with you really? He was with an organization that believed in memorizing a verse of scripture every week, and they called it the verse of the week. He said, if you really want to know, my verse for the week is, hang it on your beak, freak. We began then to have a very honest conversation.

Have you ever had a week like that, where your verse for the week was, hang it on your beak, freak? Now, if it's true that God is able to make all grace abound toward us so that we have all sufficiency all the time for everything, why do we have weeks like that? Well, there are a lot of answers to that question. I heard one, I heard about this young man who went to Bermuda one summer, and he sent his Corvette convertible on ahead of him, and he didn't know the speed limit over there was 20 miles an hour. So when he got over there to spend the summer and he had this white Corvette convertible with a big power plant under the hood, he was very, very frustrated driving that thing around 20 miles an hour, always following around somebody, some old person on a moped.

They ride a lot of mopeds over there. So one day he was following this old man on a moped, and he couldn't stand it. He hit the passing gear and went out around this man, and the old man passed right by him on the moped.

And he couldn't believe it. So by reflex, he hit the accelerator again, and he went up to about 45, and the old man went right by him. And he went up to 65, and the old man shot right by him again.

And he realized he was going almost 85 by this time, and he thought, I'd better stop this car, they're going to put me under the jail. So he pulled off to the side of the road, the old man pulled right in behind him, and he went back to the old man who was looking at the ground, white as a sheet, and he said, hey old man, what kind of a power plant have you got in that bike? And the old man said, it wasn't the power plant, son, he said, my suspenders were caught on your bumper. I think this is one answer to the question, if God is able to make all this grace abound toward us, why don't we have it? Maybe we're piggybacking somebody who has it, and we don't have a power plant of our own.

Maybe we see someone who really has charisma, and we follow them around and we try to just live on their Holy Spirit charisma, and that's why we're so spasmodic and inconsistent and up and down and on and off like that man whose suspenders were caught on the bumper of the Corvette. I asked a Catholic nun one day what she thought of the charismatic movement in the Catholic Church, and she said that when it first started she asked her bishop in Boston, because it confused her, she said, Father, are the charismatics going to heaven? And she said, the old bishop just bit on his pipe and said, if they don't overshoot it. He said, well, when we think about charisma, we think about so many things.

Now frankly, the book of Joshua is all about charisma. That's really what it's all about. In the book of Joshua it's a literal geographical land, it's the land of Canaan.

This land of Canaan is to be entered, it's to be conquered, one city at a time, one nation at a time. But the application, and that's what we're interested in in this survey, the devotional application of the book of Joshua is not really about a geographical land and that kind of a conquest. It's about charisma.

It's about grace. Do you believe that God is able to make all grace abound toward you, not Billy Graham or the pastor, but you, so that you always, not some of the time, but all of the time, can find in him and in his grace a sufficiency for everything he's called you to do, so that you might not just go limping, but abounding to everything that he's called you to do in this life? You see, the land of Canaan pictures the purpose of the salvation of the people of Israel. Their deliverance from Egypt, that's their salvation.

Canaan, that's the purpose of their salvation. Your salvation comes from believing that Jesus Christ is God's only Son, he's God's only solution, he's God's only Savior. You put your faith in that and he saves you.

He delivers you from your spiritual Egypt. Now, what's the purpose of that salvation? Whatever your spiritual Canaan is, that's the purpose. The Apostle Paul put it this way, he saved us by grace through faith, which was not of ourselves, it was the gift of God, and we weren't saved by good works, but Paul says in Ephesians 2.10, we were saved unto good works which God before ordained that we should walk in them.

You see, that's the purpose of our salvation in this life. God has certain works he wants each of us to experience. He wants us to walk in them.

He wants us to experience certain ministries. He didn't just save us to take us to heaven. Salvation is more than fire insurance or a fire escape or a one-way ticket to heaven.

It is that, and that's very important, but it's a lot more than that. There is a purpose for our salvation. That's what the land of Canaan pictures.

The reason why we don't have this grace is because we don't understand how to implement it, how to apply it, how to appropriate it. We just simply don't know what faith is. That's why God has given us the book of Joshua.

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