

Joshua (Part 5): Strength and Courage for the Weak and Fearful

by Richard Siple

The sermon emphasizes the importance of strength and courage through God's presence and obedience to His word in facing life's challenges.

Duration: 38:56

Scripture: Joshua 1:5-8, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:31-32

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

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of faith and obedience in the life of a believer. He encourages the audience to think, speak, and act according to God's thoughts, words, and deeds. The speaker shares a story of a woman facing multiple challenges and how she sought God's guidance through prayer. He also challenges the audience to reflect on their own spiritual goals and desires, urging them to consider where they want to go in their relationship with God. The sermon concludes with a reminder that the world is fallen and messy, but believers can find hope and purpose by trusting in God's plan.

Transcript

What then shall we say in response to all this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not also along with him freely give us all things? Amen. Please open your Bibles with me this morning to the book of Joshua, to my favorite passage in that book, and one of my favorite passages in the entire Old Testament Scripture. Joshua chapter 1 verses 5 through 9. And while you're looking that up, let me remind you that we're back into our fit or misfit series tonight.

And tonight will be the last one before we actually start taking each gift separately, and there'll be a whole sermon on each one. But tonight's message is a very special one. I enjoy it probably more than any of the others, and I think you will enjoy it very much also.

Because we're going to take all seven motivational gifts, people with those on a hospital call, as Christians, and we're going to walk you through it and see how they handle it. And then we're going to take all seven motivational gifts into a church board meeting and see how they handle it. It is it is a wonderful, clear definition of what we're talking about.

So don't miss it. And I'm going to have a small gift for everyone who comes tonight, not because I want to give you a gift, though I don't mind, but because it helps to illustrate my sermon. And so don't you miss that.

You make sure you're here tonight, 630, very special time. Joshua 1 verses 5 through 9. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous. You're going to see that three times in this passage.

Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you.

Do not turn from it to the right or to the left that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified.

Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. God is saying to us, and he says it three times in this short passage, be strong and courageous. Be strong and courageous.

Be strong and courageous. Do you feel strong? Some of you probably do, but maybe some of you don't feel very strong. How many of you here ever feel weak? Yeah, and the rest of you just aren't old enough.

Hang in there. You'll get there. And do you ever feel like your courage is going down and you're discouraged? How many are ever, ever discouraged? Oh good.

I don't mean that you're discouraged, but good that you told the truth. Interesting world, isn't it? A world that has fallen. And I have to keep reminding myself of that all the time, because I live in a wonderful country with tremendous freedom and with everything I need.

But basically the world is a fallen world and it's a big mess, right? It is a terrible mess. And as all of us have watched the terrible storms that have ravaged the southern coast of the United States, and so much of it I can see in my mind because we lived right down there. And I was pastor of a little church down there and I swam out in the Gulf of Mexico, where you can walk for a mile out into the Gulf.

And I just see all that. Hadn't been too many years since we were down in the area. I have a brother that lives over in the Florida panhandle.

And so, you know, as we have watched all that and we have seen people lose absolutely everything except their life. I mean, they have lost their home and all their possessions and their car or truck or vehicle and their job because the businesses were gone too. Everything was gone.

So they didn't even have a place to go to work, even if they had a place to live. And everything was swept away. Can you imagine being in that position? How would you handle it? How could you go on? What would you do? And you see them go back and stand there and look.

Everything is just a pile of rubble and mud. There's nothing. And the place they worked is gone.

And you say, how would you go on? And I thought about that. And then I thought about some of the Christians that I know who face really great difficulties in their lives. Some physical difficulties, some families, some loved ones, sometimes their jobs, all kinds of things.

Not exactly like that, but nevertheless, difficulties still. How are you going to go on? How are you going to be strong and courageous? Well, Paul says it in Ephesians, be strong in the Lord and in the might of his power. The only way that you can really face life with victory is to be strong in the Lord.

It's the only way you can have courage. It's the only way you can keep at it. It's the only way you can get through because I promise you there'll be plenty to get you to take a detour or to stop you or to get you discouraged or to make you throw up your hands and quit.

But you can be strong in the Lord and you can finish well. Amen. Paul said, I have fought a good fight.

I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. I'm ready to go to heaven.

That's a good way to end it. And some of you are young and you're nowhere near that. I hope, but you have life ahead of you, young or old, how are you going to handle it? And there are three things I want to say to you quickly this morning, and they have to do with three questions.

First of all, where do I want to go? Where do I want to go in my life? What do I want to see happen in my life? For instance, where do I want to go in my life spiritually? As I look at my life spiritually, are there areas that I'm very disappointed in? Areas that I'm not satisfied about? There are places that I want to go farther than that for God. There are goals I'd like to reach for God. There are purposes and plans and things I'd like to accomplish for the Lord.

I still have some. You say, you're a fool. Yes, but I enjoy it.

Do you know where you're going? Do you have any, any purpose, any plan? Are you headed anywhere spiritually? Is there anything you want to do for God? Or are you just satisfied to sit there with your arms folded and hear good sermons and thank God you have a good church? Or, or is there some passion and desire to go somewhere and accomplish something? And I want to ask that question, where do I want to go? Because Joshua knew where he was supposed to go. You know, he said, God said, you will lead these people to inherit the land. I swore to their forefathers to give them.

He knew where he was going. He knew what God wanted him to do. And he knew what he had to do to get there.

And he had a purpose and a goal that was from God. And he was headed that way. So I can't help, but ask you where, where do you want to go? What do you want to accomplish? Are you satisfied with your Christian life the way it is? Somebody says, no, I'd like to develop a life of prayer.

All right. Good purpose. Somebody says, I've never led anybody to Christ.

I would like to begin to be a soul winner. Wonderful. Great.

Let's, let's get at it. You say, well, I really believe, and you're going to see this in this fit or misfit. I really believe that what I'd like to do above all things is succeed in business and give lots of money to the work of

God.

Amen. We'll take it. You say, well, how could that be a purpose? It sure could be a purpose.

And I've known people that had that as a purpose and wow, God blessed their lives. They were blessed not only financially, but spiritually. A well-known preacher was playing golf.

I hope it wasn't on Sunday. He was playing golf and he sliced the ball into the rough. That looks like me.

And there was a young man raking leaves that helped him find the ball. Young man realized who he was. And he said, sometime I would like to talk to you about myself.

And the preacher said, when he said, sometime he said, when young man was startled and he said, Oh, I don't mean now just sometime. The preacher said, sometimes seldom comes meet me at the 18th hole in about 30 minutes. So they met the preacher said to the young man.

Now what's on your mind? Oh, I don't know. I just want to get somewhere. Where exactly, where do you want to get? Young man looked bewildered.

Oh, I don't know where. I just know I want to get somewhere else from where I am now. I don't know just where.

And when the preacher said, and when do you plan to get where you don't know where you want to get? This is what are you? This is serious stuff. Confused and a bit irritated. He replied, how do I know when just sometime I want to get somewhere sometime.

The man asked him what he liked to do best. And he didn't have any idea. See, that that's, that's one of my problems in life.

I just simply can't be satisfied. I want to do something yet for God. Amen.

Want to do something for God. So that's where I want to begin this morning. If you want to be strong and courageous and accomplish something for God, then ask yourself, and you may need to go away and get alone with God and get quiet and pray, get a piece of paper and a pencil, ask God to speak to your heart and to show you what you need to do in your Christian life that that you're not doing.

What do you need to accomplish? You haven't accomplished. Where does God want you to go in your Christian life? And I promise you, if you get quiet, it won't take very long. There'll be some things God will start to say to you.

Absolutely. That young man was like some of us. We need to ask ourselves, where am I feeling as a Christian? What change needs to be made for me to succeed as a Christian? What will it cost me? Am I willing to pay the price? When will I take the first steps? Right? So that's where we begin.

Second question. Where am I going to get the power to do it? Where am I going to get the ability, the strength, the power to do what God wants me to do? Well, the answer is quite simple. God said to Joshua, I will be with you.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. God said, Joshua, I've given you a purpose.

I have told you what you're supposed to do, and I want you to be strong and courageous and to get at it. And the big issue is that you're going to do it through my power because I will be with you. We need to really recognize the presence and the lordship and the power of Christ in our lives.

Now I want to read you again what I've read already in this series, Joshua 5, 13 to 15. God makes this very, uh, dramatically plain to Joshua that he means business, that he is going to be with him. Now, when Joshua was near Jericho, Joshua 5, 13 to 15, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand.

And Joshua went up to him and asked, are you for us or for our enemies? Neither he replied, but as commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come. Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence and ask what message does my Lord have for his servant? The commander of the Lord's army replied, take off your sandals for the place where you're standing is holy. And Joshua did so.

God said, Joshua, I want to make it clear to you in a very dramatic way that you'll never forget that I'm here. I'm in charge. I have the power.

I'll see you through. I've given you my word. Depend on me.

It's a great thing to depend on God. It's up to God. It's not up to you.

It's up to God. It's up to you to believe it. It's up to you to obey.

It's up to you to take the next step, step by step and commit yourself, but it's up to him to come through. Do you think he will? He said, Joshua, you're never going to forget this. And there he was and Joshua respond with reverence and awe and worship over the presence of God in his life.

You know what makes my life sacred? Not my goodness, but his presence. If you're a Christian, that makes your life sacred. You need to treat your life with awe and reverence and respect because Christ is in your life.

You need to worship at his feet and surrender everything to him and trust him and believe him to work in power. Colossians two, six to 10 says, so then just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness for in Christ, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in a bodily form and you have been given completeness in Christ, who is ahead over every power and authority. How's that for good promise? You have all you need in Christ.

He's ahead of everything and he is in your life. Strength out of weakness, strength out of weakness. There was a man five feet, nine inches tall.

That would be about my size, except he weighed what I weighed when I was 30, 148 pounds. Don't snicker. He was driving his car behind a tractor trailer truck.

Suddenly the truck swerved, it jackknifed, it crashed into the ditch, turned over and burst into flames. The man in the car was a Christian. He jammed on his brakes, ran to the cab.

The driver was unconscious and the fire was spreading. He tried to open the door, but couldn't. He tried harder and couldn't.

Fire was coming closer. An explosion was possible any minute. The man was a complete believer in Jesus Christ and his power.

He suddenly cried out, oh God, help me, give me strength. He grabbed ahold of the door and it came open and he dragged the driver out of the truck and saved his life. That's a true story.

That's wonderful to be able to trust in the Lord. The right front tie rod dropped loose and we were headed for a big hole in the side of the road and couldn't control the car. And all I could think of was, here we go to heaven.

God said, no, you still have to preach at Central. There's a lot between that and this. And the car hit the hole and went up on its corner and went over and rolled down the hillside in the North Carolina mountains.

Over and over and over and bashed in the roof and over and over and stopped and pulverized the window on my wife's side. And men come running down from the road and pulled us out and we weren't even dirty. No, that's right.

My wife had a beautiful summer frock on, she looked just fresh as a daisy. We weren't scratched, nothing. You better get your life in God's hands.

Let me tell you a story out of a Chattanooga, Tennessee newspaper. Christians didn't write this, a worldly reporter wrote it. Four women were in a dress shop, three customers and one clerk.

A big tough looking man entered with a knife in one hand, a revolver in the other. Hand over your money, he cried. And they gave him all their money and it only came to about \$55.

The man was really angry. He shouted, lie down on the floor. If you move, I'll kill you.

There was one of the women who was in the dress shop. She was a young woman, she was a young woman. She was in the dressing room.

He heard her moving in there. He yanked open the door, robbed her, handled her roughly and cut her slightly. Then the woman reacted, pulling herself to her full height.

She said in a strong authoritative voice, stop this in the name of Jesus Christ. I command you to leave us alone. Stop this wickedness.

A look of astonishment came over the robber's face. Bewildered, he ran from the shop, leaped in a car and sped away. Later, when he was captured by the police, he said, that woman had a power like I've never seen before.

Hallelujah. What power? Jesus said, I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

He said, no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. I will be with you. Christ there, his power, his power.

We need his power because he is in our lives. It was a man who was the head of a well-known boys prep school out in the Eastern United States. When a boy, he decided to drop out of school and work in a foundry.

Later, he changed his mind and went back to school. Now he was behind. It was a great struggle to catch up.

He said he did it by study and prayer. His mother was a devout Christian of the old school and she made him promise never to study on Sunday. You say, is that wrong? I don't, I'm not saying it's wrong.

I'm just saying she made him promise not to do it. He kept the promise. The time came for a college entrance exam in Greek.

Yuck. Yuck. It was scheduled for 11 a.m. on Monday morning.

He was not ready. He said it was all Greek to me. He rose at 3 a.m. Monday morning, opened his Greek textbook to study.

He prayed, Lord, I have an examination today at 11 o'clock. If you want me to go to college, please help me with this examination. I have only a few hours.

Tell me what to study. The number of a page came to his mind. He turned to that section, studied it until he had the material memorized.

He found the examination was based almost entirely on that section. He passed. He told the professor about it.

The professor said that he chose the material for the exam at about eight in the morning, three hours before, but five hours after he started studying. The professor thought it was a great example of mind transference. That'd be neat if you could do it.

Excuse me, sir, said the young man. I believe it was more than that. God wanted to use me.

He wanted me to continue my education. So he put into my mind what he was going to put into yours. God is God.

See, we have got to learn to live our lives in God. We've got to learn to live as sons of the most high God with Christ in our lives and our commitment to him total and our trust in him complete. He won't help you to be lazy, but he can sure help you when you're in a fix.

Third question, what are the steps I should take? Well, they're given in this great passage of scripture. There's steps of faith and obedience. And of course we all know that old song, trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Verse eight of my passage, do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night, your mind, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it, your actions, then you will be prosperous and successful. And here it is, think what God thinks, say what God says and do what God does.

Think his thoughts, say his words and do his deeds. Did you write that down? Think his thoughts, say his words and do his deeds. And God said, if you do that, you'll make it.

If you do that, you'll find victory. You'll find that I am there. Now, the military strategy that God gave him to take Jericho doesn't make a bit of sense to me.

And I have never heard a militarist try to make sense of it. It was certainly not a military maneuver to go there for seven days, walk around the place once a day and go back on the seventh day and walk around it seven times and blow your trumpets and shout. And then the walls would fall down.

It does not sound, you know, like something right out of the third army, does it? But it was what God said to do. Also, they were not to take any spoil whatsoever. Why? Because they weren't gonna do anything.

It was God who was gonna do it. All they were gonna do is walk in his steps, obey his voice, trust in him. And then God was going to do the rest.

God knocked the walls down. God took the city. And so it belonged to him.

And he said, don't touch it. It's mine. I get all the glory.

My friend, if you want to see God work in your life, give him all the glory. Give him all the glory. God says, I will not share my glory with another.

He does say, those that honor me, I will honor. That's nice. But he gets all the glory, all the praise, right? Because he does the work.

For by grace, you have been saved through faith that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. We march around our Jericho step by step, every step, a step of faith. They literally walked by faith in the word of God.

A cowboy who lives in Wyoming tells the following story. He was brought up by a widow, his Aunt May, on a homestead in Eastern Colorado. There were four children.

They fought dust storms, tornadoes, poverty, grasshoppers, everything. When the grasshoppers came, the aunt decided to get turkeys to eat the grasshoppers. God has all kinds of ideas.

She was a very earnest Christian, prayed. God led her to get turkeys to eat the grasshoppers. And she ended up raising turkeys and finally had 2000 turkeys.

They were doing pretty good. They went to the fields to watch and protect them. And she took her Bible with her and read and prayed out in the field.

Sounds like David. One day, they looked up to see a terrible hail storm coming. I mean, not the little hail we had here the other morning.

I mean, big hail like golf balls. She knew the hail would kill the entire flock of turkeys. It was too late to get them to shelter.

The man telling the story said, he told his aunt, run, we need to run. She said, no, we're not running. We're staying here with the birds.

His Aunt May just stood there in the middle of the flock with her Bible held to her chest, watching the storm come. She opened her Bible and started shouting scripture at the storm, Psalm 107, 28 to 30. This is great.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet.

So he brings them into their desired haven. He blesses them also so that they are multiplied greatly and suffers not their cattle to decrease or their turkeys. Who is wise and will observe these things.

Even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord. Can't you see this old lady standing there shouting the scripture at the storm. I love it.

God bless her. The storm shifted and passed safely to the north and spared their turkeys. Some of you really don't think God is that practical, do you? You just don't, you don't say that's not very religious.

It's really, we need to get practical day by day, step by step, hour by hour, committed to Christ. And that's what we need to do. And trust him and his word and watch him work.

I have to give you this one. A 34 year old woman in Pittsburgh went to see her minister. She told him the following story.

Her husband had died a year before that. Her child had been badly burned by grease and they'd run out of money for treatment. The store where she worked went out of business.

The insurance company never paid on her husband's life insurance because during his illness, he missed the last premium. Now what? Well, said the minister, the first thing, let us pray and put all of your problems in the hands of the Lord and believe him to work. So they prayed together.

While they were praying, she had a strong impression that she should go back and see the manager of the insurance company. She tried several times, but the receptionist wouldn't let her in. That's why I never asked him.

I just go wherever I wanna go. One day when she arrived, the receptionist was out of the office. She simply walked into the manager's office.

She apologized, but told him she had prayed and was sure God had sent her there. The manager got out her file, decided that she should have been paid and wrote out a full check for the life insurance. Then he asked, what else can I do for you? She told him about her burned child.

He checked the policy and found the child was also covered for medical treatment. Wow. Suppose she hadn't prayed.

What else can I do for you? She said, I need a job. So he helped her get employment. Later, she was in his office on business and he asked her, what else can I do for you? Why nothing? She said, you've been very helpful and kind and I do appreciate it so much.

Well, there's something you can do for me. He said, you are a widow and I am a widower. I would like very much to marry you.

Will you marry me? That's great. You say, what happened? Well, they got married. That woman came out of complete, total, utter disaster with nothing and ended up with everything she needed.

Do you believe God loves you? Why do you think he wants to treat you so bad? If he loves you. What will give me the strength and courage I need to face the realities of life? First, I need to know where I want to go with God. Then I need to recognize God's presence in my life and trust him totally.

Then I need to step out in faith and fill my mind and my mouth and my deeds with the Lord himself. But some are not going to do that. Lord Kenneth Clark, internationally known for his television series, Civilization, lived and died without faith in Jesus Christ and is in hell.

In his autobiography, he wrote about an overwhelming religious experience he had while visiting a beautiful church. My whole being, Clark wrote, was irradiated by a kind of hellishness. Heavenly joy, far more intense than anything I had ever known in my life.

Unfortunately, this flood of grace, as he described it, created a problem for him, as he later wrote. If he allowed himself to be influenced by it, he knew he would have to change. His family might think he had lost his mind or perhaps the intense joy would prove to be an illusion.

So he concluded, now listen, I was too deeply embedded in the world to change course. I hope you're not. I hope you're not too deeply embedded in the way the world lives to change course.

To find out what God wants for you, to put your trust totally in him, and step by step, to step out in obedience and faith and watch God work in your life. I wanna close with a poem that maybe says it all. I said, let me walk in the field.

He said, no, walk in the town. I said, there are no flowers there. He said, no flowers but a crown.

I said, but the skies are black. There's nothing but noise and din. And he wept as he sent me back.

There is more, he said, there is sin. That reminds me when I went to Akron, Ohio. Dirty, sinful.

I said, but the air is thick and fogs are veiling the sun. He answered, yet souls are sick and souls in the dark undone. I said, I shall miss the light and friends will miss me, they say.

He answered, choose tonight if I am to miss you or they. I pleaded for time to be given. He said, is it hard to decide? It will not seem hard in heaven to have followed the steps of your guide.

I cast one look at the fields, then set my face to the town. He said, my child, do you yield? Will you leave the flowers for the crown? Then into his hand went mine and into my heart came he and I walk in a light divine, the path I had feared to see. Let us pray.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You are so faithful, so kind.

Thank you. We trust you. We want to commit our lives totally to you.

We want to walk with you and follow you all the way. Help us to do that. Only you can make it possible.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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