

The Stones of Testing

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of carrying the testimony of Jesus' victory over death as a foundational aspect of God's purpose for His people.

Duration: 18:54

Scripture: Joshua 4:1-3, Joshua 4:24 - 5:1, Joshua 5:13-14, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Testing"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of a concrete testimony to the power of God's resurrection and victory over death. He uses the story of Joshua and the crossing of the Jordan River as an example. The speaker highlights the significance of the twelve stones that were placed in the river as a symbol of God's triumph. He emphasizes that this testimony should not just be a theory or teaching, but something that is real and manifested in the lives of believers. The speaker also mentions how this testimony can impact not only believers but also the enemies of the Lord, causing them to lose heart.

Transcript

Our meditation for a few minutes will be in the book of Joshua, in the book of Joshua chapter 4. And it came to pass when all the nations were clean passed over Jordan that the Lord spake unto Joshua saying, take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them saying, take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priest's feet stood found, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where ye shall lodge this night. Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared of the a man. Joshua said unto them, pass over before the ark of the Lord your God in the midst of the Jordan, and take you up every man of you a spoon upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, that it may be a sign among you that when your children ask in time to come saying, what mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall say unto them, because the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off, and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.

Children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord speak unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and they carried over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan in the place where the feet of the priests which bear the ark of the

covenant stood, and there and they are there unto this day. For the priests which bear the ark stood in the midst of Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord commanded.

Chapter five came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites which were beyond Jordan westward, all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more because of the children of Israel. You know historically and symbolically this represents the crisis of the fullness of God's purpose concerning his people. That toward which he had moved and walked and been patient through many years.

That which now was immediately before them. And at this crisis or this turning point in that relationship, as at every crisis relating to something more of the Lord, the people were and we are brought back to our foundation. To the foundation.

These stones, twelve on the land and twelve in the Jordan were the foundation stones of everything concerning the purpose of God. We know the typology of these waters of the Jordan which at this time were spread over not only the river bed but the land round about in a mighty inundation for it says that season Jordan overfloweth all its banks. These waters typify the floods of death.

The floods of death. Death at the full. The ark we know is the symbol figure of Jesus.

And Jesus taking up his position in the great priestly ministry right in the heart of death's flood and flood time. And as he did so, death gave way. As we are told in the word, he could not beholden of it.

That is, it had no power over him. It had to yield to his presence. He conquered it.

It stood up. The mighty flood was held in its course and broken in its way. It had no power.

Death had no power over him. But here this record is intended to teach us that in the place where death reigned universally, a testimony is planted. And planted forever.

For whenever we come on that little phrase, and there it is until this day, it is meant to imply permanence. It goes on. Something unchanged.

Right in the place of death's fullness and overwhelming, there is a testimony that its power has been broken. That its long course has been interrupted. That it has not held on its way forever.

There's something which forever says death has been arrested and its power broken. Well that is of course the gospel in its objective form. Now the message here for us this morning is this.

That what is there right in the very scene of that triumph, of that overcoming, of that mighty thing has got to have a counterpart on the land. Where it can be seen. Right here.

Where everybody can note it and the children can say what's the meaning of this? What do you mean by this? Something clearly manifests in the very life of the people. That it is not only a looking back to something that was. It's looking to something that here is.

And we can say what was is. What was there is here. It's something to be seen.

The very foundation of everything in the purpose of God and in the full purpose of God for his people has got to be a literal actuality. Right here. Every day where it can be taken note of.

That means more exact words but there have got to be people who will take it up on their shoulders and say I make myself responsible for that testimony. I carry on my shoulders that testimony. I am one in whom through whom it can be seen that Jesus has conquered death.

There is a death conquering life present with us. And inasmuch as twelve men were chosen and twelve stones were placed here and twelve there. While we know that in the symbolism of numbers twelve means government we'll not stay with that aspect.

Twelve is always representation of the Lord's people. And the Lord does choose amongst his people those who know something deeper of the death and mightier of the resurrection. Who've gone in and who come out with a testimony on their shoulders.

A representative company. It's his will for all his people of course. But there are those who have got to stand for the people of God in this matter.

Carry the burden of this testimony for the people of God. That all in looking may see what God wants concerning them and see it in these. My brothers and sisters the great Joshua.

It's the same name you know Jesus Joshua. The Lord the Savior. This greater Joshua.

Our Lord Jesus would select men and women whom he can take into the testimony in a very real way and bring them out with it on their shoulders so to speak carrying its responsibility. We do not think in terms of an elect of the elect of a select people in that technical sense. But we do know it is true.

We see it through the Bible again and again right to the end of the Bible in the book of the Revelation that there are those who come into a closer association with the Lord in the meaning of his death and resurrection on behalf of others. On behalf of others. That others may see what the Lord wants.

That they may see that this thing is real. These have gone into the depths. These have known something of the place of the flood.

These have been where the Lord has been in measure and have learned his victory. Have learned his power. Who have come out with something on their shoulders of a testimony to the power of his resurrection.

His death conquering life. He would select a representative company. And if the Lord deals with any in that deeper way, that so much deeper way, understand, understand that he is building something that is not just doctrine teaching about the death and the resurrection but making it very real in certain lives.

Perhaps in certain places. That it may be seen. Take a note of the coming generations now rising around may be affected and say what is the meaning of this? And be instructed by that which has come out of Jordan's deep bed.

That which carries in it the significance of his mighty, mighty victory. And it is not only for themselves. It is not only for other believers.

That's why I read on into chapter 5 and saw the chapter was divided at that point. Should not have been. All the enemies of the Lord lost heart when they saw this testimony in action.

The conquest of the land. The possessing of the inheritance. The overthrow of the evil forces which came about because this thing was real in the life of the Lord's people.

They fought, but they fought without a heart. Listen to what Rahab said about it. When we heard what the Lord did, our hearts fainted.

There was no strength left in us anymore. But when the enemy fights and he will fight, but he hasn't got much heart for this fight. When he seeks.

But this testimony is not theory. It's not teaching. Not doctrine.

But it's on the very shoulders of men and women. They carry it. It's something that is real in them.

Now we may be going into the deep places. But this is the Lord's object. There shall be a concrete testimony to the power of his resurrection and his victory over death.

You notice that the waters came back again. They overflowed as before. They spread themselves over the earth again.

And yet not as before. There were twelve stones right down there at the bottom which said your sway is not universal while we are here. They were a denial.

Your friends, death spreads over the earth. Even since Calvary. Even since the resurrection.

It spread over. But has the Lord got his stones of testimony which say yes, but death is not universal. And while this testimony remains as it will.

The heart of death is taken out of it. Power of death is not universal. We testify to the fact that that path has been broken and that eventually it will be utterly destroyed.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. You get the message of the Lord? I think so. The message to you, to me, to us.

What are you going to do? Now that's not just a message. That's a challenge. Shall we take up with both hands the stones of testimony? Say as for me, by the grace of God, I will be something that others can see in this matter.

He has conquered death and in me the power of his resurrection shall be seen. The Lord help us.

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