

Be Strong And Fear Not
Joshua 1:1-9
Pastor John Miller

Okay, why don't you open your Bibles if you haven't yet to Joshua chapter one. And we begin on Sunday morning now, a new journey through the book of Joshua. We won't cover every chapter, every verse. Our focus is going to be more the man Joshua as opposed to the book of Joshua, but you'll learn the book of Joshua, kind of the outlay of the book, what it is, why it is. This morning we just get an introduction to the man Joshua. The series is titled Courageous Christian Living. This is part one. And the sermon this morning is titled Be Strong and Fear Not. God wants to speak to us this morning, whatever we're facing, that we be strong, we fear not, we be not discouraged, that we can trust in God as we walk in obedience and victory to him. So, Joshua chapter one verses one to nine.

Would you join me please again in the word of prayer? Father, we bow before Your Word. We thank You, Lord, for the truth of Your Word, and we pray that the power of Your Word would transform our lives, our minds. I pray for marriages, I pray for families, I pray for homes, I pray for single folk and maybe divorced folk, I pray for those that maybe have been bereaved of a husband or wife, they're widowed. Lord, the young people that are here today, all ages, all groups, may they be strong, may they be courageous, may they not be afraid, may they know that you are with them, and Lord that you will protect them and use them. And Lord, as you called Joshua, you call us to follow you in obedient, courageous faith. So, speak now, we pray through this passage in Jesus' name and everyone agreeing said, amen.

I want you to follow just in verse one, beginning in chapter one of Joshua: "Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying..."

After 40 years of death and despair, the children of Israel have now finally reached the eastern banks of the Jordan River, and on the bank of the Jordan, they could look over into the promised land. Now it's one thing to look into the promised land, it's another thing to enter into the promised land and to conquer the land that God has promised. So now God is going to raise up a new leader. Joshua has become the leader of the people who would go into the land, "Moses my servant is dead." The book of Joshua is the first book of history in the Old Testament, first book to be named after an individual, but actually it's a book of new beginnings, a book of new beginnings. We have a new leader, notice it in verse one, his name is Joshua, "Moses, my servant, is dead." That's recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 34. By the way, just a footnote here, notice that God's leaders do eventually die. All of the great men and women used by God eventually go the way of all flesh. The Bible says it's appointed unto everyone to die. And so, "Moses, my servant, is dead." What a great, great man was Moses. He was actually drawn out of the Nile by the princess, preserved by God, raised in the court of Pharaoh, and he became second to Pharaoh, in the land of power, tried to deliver Israel by his own power, ran away and hid in the desert of Midian. Called at age 80 by God, he led God's people out in the

Exodus and was given the 10 commandments. I can't think of anyone greater than Moses, wrote the first five books of the Bible, we call the Pentateuch, Genesis to Deuteronomy. We're going to see actually in the context of this verses that this was scripture, this was the word of the Lord that Moses had written.

So, they get a new leader, his name, verse one, is Joshua. Now the name Joshua, his name first was Hoshua and then Moses changed it to Joshua. So Hoshua, meaning "saves," and Jehovah Shua or Joshua meaning "the Lord saves," or "Jehovah saves," or "God saves." Now the name Joshua is the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament what? Jesus. The name Jesus means "Jehovah saves," our God is our salvation. There's an interesting parallel there between Joshua who leads them into the promised land and Jesus who leads us into the land of promise and of spiritual blessing. Moses, the law, cannot take you into the promised land as the law cannot save. Only Jesus Christ can save us and lead us into the promised land. So, they have a new leader, they have a new land, and they have a new life. I wonder this morning if you need a new beginning. If so, the book of Joshua is for you.

Now it's interesting before we get into this text that the people of Israel had four geographic locations. They, first of all had Egypt, and in typology, you might say Egypt represents the unsaved life or the unregenerated life, or life before you were in a relationship with God through Jesus; that in the book of, or in Exodus, that is typical of the world before conversion. They came out in the Exodus, in the Passover, even as we come out of the world through the cross of Jesus Christ. Then for 40 years, what happened to this nation of slaves? They walked around in the longest death march in history, right? Can you imagine seeing, "I've seen that rock now for the 40th time, isn't that the same rock we saw last year?" God protected them, God was with them, but they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. This represents the carnal life, a Christian out of Egypt, but not yet entered into the Promised Land. Maybe you're here today, you've been born again, you've been saved for a long time, but you haven't really gotten into obedience to God's Word, reading God's Word, following God's Word, living for the Lord. You're not walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power. You're not living a spirit-filled life. You're walking in the wilderness. And then the third geographic location is Canaan, and that represents the Promised Land. And for the believer, it represents actually the land of abundant spiritual blessing. We're going to see that in this chapter, "I've given it to you. Every place the soul of your feet shall tread, it is yours." For the believer, once we're saved, it's walking in obedience, walking in the spirit, claiming the promises of God, standing on the truth of God's word. It's the courageous, victorious Christian life. But there's another geographic location for Israel. and for the believer, and that is Babylon. Babylon was the place that they were taken as captive and it represents for the believer, the backslider. That you turn your back on God after walking with God and you go back to the world, so to speak, or back to the old life of bondage. I wonder about you this morning, ask yourself, what is your spiritual geographic location? Are you unsaved living in Egypt? Are you saved but walking in the wilderness? Are you saved and walking in the fullness of God's blessings? Or are you saved and turned away from the Lord and living in the world again? You're backslidden, you need to come back to the Lord today.

The Lord wants us to enter Canaan's land and to enjoy the fullness of his blessings. How will

this happen? Courageous Christian living. By following our Joshua, Jesus Christ, we can conquer our enemies and possess our spiritual blessings. Now, in our text, we see that God prepares Joshua to lead the people into the land, and he does three things for him. Joshua becomes the general of the Lord's army, and he's going to take them across the Jordan, we're going to look at that in a couple weeks. They're going to take Jericho, they're going to move into the land, go into the center of the land, go south, and then go north and conquer this land. But this new leader needs to be equipped. And that's the first thing God does for him, verses one to four. God equips and calls Joshua as God calls and equips us for our calling in life.

"So after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, came to pass it to Lord, spake unto Joshua, the son of none, Moses' minister saying, Moses, my servant, is dead." Now, I want you to catch this. God is actually speaking to Joshua, "Moses, my servant, is dead. Now therefore, arise. Go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel." Notice God had given that land to the children of Israel. "Every place...", verse three, "that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness of this Lebanon..." so way to the north, "...even unto the great river, the river Euphrates,..." far to the east, "...all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun..." that is the Mediterranean sea on the west, "shall be your coast."

Now, the first thing God does is call Joshua, verse one: "The Lord spake unto Joshua." Now, I don't know if he spoke audibly, I don't know if he spoke by an impression, I don't know if he spoke by a dream, but God spoke to Joshua. When I was a young Christian, I used to be amazed by people standing up in a testimony service and saying, "The Lord spoke to me and told me to go to this store," "The Lord spoke to me and told me to turn left" or "turn right," or "the Lord spoke to me and told me to do..." I'm thinking, "Man, the dude has a hot line to heaven, how did he get that? God spoke to you? Did His voice come through the air? Conditioning duct or something? How did God speak? Did your TV go off and all of a sudden God was on the screen or something?" Now, you need to be careful. I think a lot of people say God spoke to me, and sometimes people will assume that it was an audible voice. I believe that God can speak to us individually, subjectively, but let me make something perfectly clear. God never speaks to us to do anything or says anything contrary to his already written, revealed word. You got that? God will never speak to you and tell you to get a divorce. God will never speak to you, tell you to rob a bank. God will never speak to you and tell you to have an affair, which I have actually heard from people over the years: "God spoke to me, told me to get a divorce from my wife and to marry this other woman." No, he did not. "Well, how do you know he didn't speak to me?" Because I know he already spoke in his word. He already told you in his word that you're not supposed to do that. God's not schizophrenic, he doesn't change his mind.

Now God can speak audibly, and He does in the Bible. There are places where God spoke audibly. Spoke to Moses face to face. He audibly spoke when Jesus was baptized, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And God could speak to you audibly. I think it's rare, when someone says God spoke to me, I'm a little bit sceptic. I think primarily God speaks through the Bible. I believe God speaks through what he has spoken. And even if God does

speak to you, he's not going to contradict or add anything that's not already in the Bible. So I do find just by hearing God's voice from his word, but God can speak through an impression, through a thought, or through a desire. You can say, I feel like God is calling me or speaking to me, and that's subjective. And you must compare it with the Bible, but God can speak. But this is the call of God. I believe God called me to do what I'm doing as a pastor and as a preacher of the Bible. I don't believe that it's a choice that you make. I believe that it's a call of God. But equally, God's called you into ministry. God's called you into service. God's called you to be a husband. He's called you to be a wife. He's called you to be an electrician or a banker or a truck driver, whatever it might be. God's called you. We all have that calling of God upon our lives.

And then God prepared Joshua. He was first a slave in Egypt. That was God's preparation in his life. Then he became a spy, went into the land and with Caleb brought back the good report. Then he became a soldier. God put a sword in his hand. And then he became a servant. Verse one, "Moses' minister" or a servant to Moses. One of the great qualities of a true spiritual leader is that he knows how to play second fiddle very well. And to be a leader, you need to first be a follower. You need to learn how to submit to God and to others and have a servant's heart. So God called him, God prepared him, and I believe God is preparing you. I've become convinced more than ever before that God has been working in my own life to prepare me for what he's called me to do right now. That he's been working in my childhood, he's been working in my early adolescence and adulthood, my marriage and my parenting and my pastoring to make me who I am today. That these last several years, 40 years of ministry has been God's preparation for who I am now. Don't despise the days of small things. Don't be discouraged thinking God has bypassed me. You know how old Joshua was when he was called by God? He was around 80, give or take. He was close to 80 years of age. Now can you imagine that? No wonder God had to tell him to get up. Makes me want to sit down right now. I'm surprised that Hebrew doesn't say, "Get out of your walker and go take the land." 80? I hear of other men in ministry and they're still going strong at 80 and I think, "Wow, that's amazing." So don't be discouraged. God could call you at any point in any time in your life to do something that right now he has been preparing you for, so walk in faith and obedience.

Then God commissioned Joshua, verses two to four. God commissioned him. He told him, as I said, verse two, get up and go. That is the commission. And the first step is always the scariest, right? God says for you to go witness to your neighbor that you've lived by for 20 years and you've never talked to them about Jesus. You want me to go witness to my neighbor? I've never met him before. Go share the gospel with him. Invite him to church, tell him about Jesus. And that first step, when God speaks to us and he's prepared us to go to someone, and to share the gospel is very frightening. But God may be speaking to you today about a ministry or a calling.

Then we see the Lord spoke this promise in verse three and four, that the land is already yours. "Every place..." verse three, "that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." God always keeps his word and his promises. As a matter of fact, even farther back God said to Abraham, "I will give you this land," right? It's called the Abrahamic Covenant. "I will give you this land," and after all the ups and the downs, and the ins and outs, guess what, right now, they're going to go possess that land. It's a land of promise.

That's why it's called the promise land, because God promised it to Abraham, he promised it to David, the Davidic Covenant, and now he's giving it to God's people. God always keeps his promises. But there is a parallel, it's interesting, we just finished our series in Ephesians, and there's a parallel between the book of Joshua and the book of Ephesians. Joshua is the Old Testament equivalent to the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians chapter one, verse three, God said, "All praise..." or Paul said, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "all praise to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united in Christ." And we looked at that in Ephesians that we're blessed with all the blessings of the Spirit. The moment you were born again, you got all the blessings of the Spirit in Christ Jesus. Every Christian shares equally in these blessings. You were chosen, you were adopted, you were accepted in the beloved, you were forgiven, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise until the day of redemption, and the list goes on and on and on and on. And all these are given to all Christians the moment they are saved. You don't have to grow to get them. You don't have to work to get them. They're yours instantly. All you need to do is know what they are and to begin to appropriate them by faith and to live in that. So it's all yours.

Then he describes the boundaries of the land. Now the book of Joshua has two basic divisions. The first is conquering the land. And the second one is dividing the land. So they go in, they'll conquer the land, and then they will divide the land and possess the land. But God has blessed us, there are blessings, we need to go in and enjoy them. Heard the story of a little boy that was in Washington, and he went to the Washington Monument, and he saw a guard standing by, and he said, "I want to buy the monument." The guard said, "Well, how much money do you have?" He said, "I have 35 cents." The guard said to the young boy, he says, "first of all, 35 cents is not enough to purchase the monument, \$35 million is not enough. And secondly young boy, the Washington monument is not for sale. And thirdly, if you are an American citizen, you already own it." See, a lot of Christians don't know what they have. They don't know what they already own in Christ. That's why this verse, verse three says, "I have given it unto you." Joshua was to walk through the land, but it wouldn't be a cakewalk. There would be enemies to conquer. There would be Jericho representing the world. There would be the flesh, Ai. There would be Gibeon, the devil. Entering into the promised land of blessing isn't a cakewalk. Every time you say, "Lord, I'm going to live for you, I'm going to serve you, I'm going to follow you," guess what happens? You face giants or enemies, right? They come against you. And if you hear today, God speaks to you, you say, "Lord, I'm going to commit to following you and being obedient to you, and living for you and serving you," guess what you're going to encounter? Opposition. The life of abundance is not easy. The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground.

To equip Joshua, he now needs encouragement. So he encourages him, he calls him, and notice now in verses five to six, this encouragement, the promises he gives to him. Matter of fact, God commands Joshua, then gives him a promise. Then God commands him again, and gives him another promise. Then he gives him a third commandment, or imperative, and then he gives him another promise. Notice verse five and six, "There shall not any man be able to stand before you." So, he commands him to get up, to go over and take the land of promise.

Then he promises, he says, "There shall no man be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage," verse six, "unto this people shall thou divide and inheritance, the land which I swear to their fathers to give them." Verse six, "be strong and of good courage." Notice verse seven, "be strong and of good courage." Don't be afraid, do not be discouraged. Notice in verse nine, "be strong, be of good courage." So, verse six, verse seven, and verse nine, three times God says, "Be strong, be strong, be strong, be of good courage." God wants you to take that message to heart today. Whatever fears you face, he wants you to be strong. You will, "how can I be strong when I'm facing so many giants and enemies?" Well, God gave Joshua promises. God gave Joshua promises, and I want you to note them, verse five, "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life." Can you imagine that? A promise from God to you, no one will be able to stand against you. You are invincible if you walk in faith and obedience. God has promised you that he'll be with you all the days of your life.

"I will be with you. I was with Moses. I will be with you." What a blessed promise. And then again thirdly in verse five, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." I love that. You know one of the attributes of God that I just love the most is that attribute of God's faithfulness. You know, every earthly relationship, human relationship you have, at some point, in some time, to some degree, they will fail you, right? Anyone you know on earth is going to fail you. It's just the way it goes. Every earthly relationship to some point, to some degree. But guess who will never, ever fail you, the Lord. Amen? God says to you, as He said to Joshua, "I will never fail you." And I like that, "I will never forsake you." In Hebrews chapter 13, it's almost as though the author of Hebrews picks up on this. And He says, "The Lord has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you' so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do to me.'" That promise is for you and I as believers. In the Hebrew, this word "forsake you", this phrase, could actually be translated, "I will not drop you." I like that. Can you imagine if we're being held by God and God said, "Oops." Aren't you glad God never says, "Oops." God says, "Oh, no, I just dropped John Miller and he broke." My wife came home the other day from Lowe's, shopping at Lowe's. She said, "I bought some light bulbs. Before I could get to the cash register, I dropped them and they broke." And bless her heart, she went to the cash register and said, "I broke your bulbs. I'll pay for them." I would have just thrown them in the trash can and got some more. She's more spiritual than I am. They said, "No, no, no, no, no." Good for Lowe's. This is Lowe's advertisement. "You don't have to buy them. We'll take them. You just go get some more." You know, God never drops us. The older I get, the shakier I get, the more things I drop, you know. And I'm so glad that I'm being held by the hands of the Lord and he will not drop me, he will not fail me. I know when I, since God's call to come to Revival and we prayed for nine months and waited on the Lord's will, when I got the call, "We'd like you to come and be the pastor at revival." I mean, I got on my knees and I prayed, I said, "God, don't fail me. Don't forsake me and don't drop me. Lord, don't drop me, please don't drop me." And I've never prayed in more earnest and more agony in all my life, but I knew that God was calling me and I needed to step out in faith and be obedient.

And then notice, fourthly, in verse six, "you will inherit the land," not might inherit the land, not maybe inherit the land, you will inherit the land. God always keeps his promises. And when

Joshua came to the end of his life and he's giving his farewell speech in chapter 23, verse 14, Joshua said these words. He said, "Behold this day, I am going the way of all the earth: and you know in all of your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing have failed of all the good things the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and that one thing have failed thereof." Isn't that awesome? God calls you, God prepares you, God encourages you with his promises, and you do not need to be afraid. You don't need to be dismayed. You're worried about the economy, the value of your house, or your job, or your health, or your children. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed. Joshua must be strong and courageous. Divine sovereignty is not a substitute for human responsibility. Yes, God called Joshua. It was his sovereign plan and purpose, but Joshua needed to get up. Joshua needed to obey. Joshua needed to be strong. Joshua needed to be courageous, and we have a responsibility. God has given you his word, God has spoken to your heart, God has given you a responsibility to get up and to be the husband he's called you to be, the wife he's called you to be, the servant he's called you to be. God gives you the strength.

This is now my third point, and last, God enables Joshua, verses seven to nine. God not only equips him and encourages him, but he enables him. Verse seven, "Only be thou strong." Here's the command again. "And be very courageous that you will do and observe all according to the law which Moses, my servant, commanded thee." Where? In the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, not put together years later, but right now they had the word of the Lord. It's interesting that we have 66 books and we have a hard time obeying them. Joshua only had five books and Joshua was to obey them. So "be strong, be courageous, observe and do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left and thou mayest prosper whether soever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth..." verse eight, "...But you shall meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written again. Thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded you? Be strong, be of good courage, Be not afraid, neither be dismayed. Why, for the Lord thy God is with thee, whether so ever thou goest."

So, here's the deal, how can we be strong? How can we be courageous? How can we not be dismayed? The answer is God's word. God has given us his promises in his word. And by the power of his word, we can walk in courage and victory. Notice them, first of all in verse seven, don't turn from God's word. "Don't turn to the right hand, don't turn to the left hand, but be obedient to God's word. All that I've spoken through Moses, my servant." You know what you and I need to do? If we're going to walk in victory and we're going to walk courageously and we're going to walk in prosperity, we need to obey God's word. Don't turn from it to the right hand or to the left, become a man or a woman of the book, the Bible. "Joshua, you will prosper if you stay in the book." How do I keep from turning to the right hand or to the left hand? Well, by talking about God's word, notice in verse eight, talk about it with your mouth, then secondly, think upon it with your mind, meditate on it, and the two would go together, they would meditate by muttering, by saying God's word or quoting scripture. I think it's healthy when you're kind of driving in your car just to quote scripture. Call back to mind. This passage we covered today, I want you to this week just meditate on it and think about it and speak it, "Don't be afraid, don't

be dismayed, I am with you, I will help you” and just meditate on God's word over and over again. This meditation implies reasoning about the word and deducting things from it. How does God's words apply to me? What does God want me to do with my life? Become a man or a woman of the book.

And then after talking about it with your mouth, thinking about it with your mind, we do it with our feet. Notice verse eight. Do, do God's word. We apply God's word with our lives. James says “be doers of the word, not hearers only.” Are you deceived your own selves? What are we to do, verse eight, all, all that is written. Obey God's word entirely. We like to pick and choose the verses we want and the verses we like. You know that all scripture is given by inspiration of God? Did you know that it's all profitable? Tell us what is right, tell us what is wrong. Tell us how to get right, tells you how to stay right. The manner a woman of God can be thoroughly equipped for all good works, you get it in the Bible. And I think many times we lack walking in Canaan's land, walking in victory, walking in joy, walking in power, because the word of God is not a part of our lives. You hear it when you come on Sunday, but that's the extent of it. You don't study the word of God, meditate on the word of God, speak the word of God, and do the word of God. What is the result, verse eight? Prosperity, that thou mayest prosper and have good success. Now this is not materialistic prosperity, God may bless you with that, but it is spiritual blessing, spiritual prosperity. God will be with you. I like what George McDonald said, he said, “Whatever man does without God, He must fail miserably or succeed more miserably.” What a great quote. Whatever you do without God, you will fail miserably or perhaps you will succeed more miserably because you're doing it without God.

We need to say God centered and God focused by meditating on his word. Ask yourself these important questions. Am I living my life in obedience to God's word? Am I living my life in obedience to God's word? Now before you can really answer that, you need to know what the Bible says, teaches. So you read the Bible, you meditate on the Bible, and then you do the Bible, amen? “And you will prosper and you will have good success.” That doesn't mean you'll drive a nice car. Don't come to me in another few months. Say, “Pastor John, I'm going to read my Bible and I still drive a junk.” But it means that you will have his presence, his peace, his joy, his voice, his power, his blessings. God will bless you. Ask yourself, am I obeying all of God's word? And secondly, ask yourself, am I seeking to serve others. God called Joshua, who was Moses' servant, to serve the entire nation now, to be their leader. Do I live a life of service to others? And then thirdly, am I bringing glory to God? You know what the bottom line in everything is? Is my life glorifying God? You are made to glorify God. The chief goal of man is to know God and enjoy him forever not to acquire things, not to have prestige and power, but to know God and enjoy God and glorify God forever.

Now notice how this text concludes in verse nine. God enables Joshua by one more command in verse nine. “Have not I commanded you? Be strong, be of good courage, Be not afraid, be thou not dismayed. Why? For the Lord, thy God is with you wherever you go.” Take that promise with you today. Be strong, be of good courage, be not afraid, be not dismayed, be not discouraged. Why? Because God is with you. He has prepared you, he has given you promises, He gives you the power to keep His commands. Only one last thing for us to do, you know what

it is? It's for us to get up, for us to rise up. For us to stand up, amen, and now to walk in obedience to God's word, amen. Let's pray.