

159 Never failed, never forsaken

The outlook for Joshua was daunting, to say the least! He found himself as the new leader of God's people, following the recent death of Moses, the renowned "servant of the Lord", on Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34.1-7). Even though the children of Israel had so often murmured against Moses over the years in the wilderness, they had now wept for him for thirty days (verse 8).

And so the baton of leadership was passed to Joshua, who "was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (verse 9). Even so, as he looked ahead, Joshua could well have felt way out of his depth. "Journey's end" for the people was so near, and yet so far - all they had to do was cross the River Jordan, and then at last they would be in the Promised Land! But, how to cross the river? - and then, how to deal with the hostile inhabitants of the Land who, not surprisingly, were not best pleased to see them.

We read that "the Lord spake unto Joshua, Moses' minister" (Joshua 1.1) - showing Himself ever-sensitive, and ever-attentive. His words are magnificent! - "Arise, go over this Jordan.... every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage Only be thou strong and very courageous" (from verses 2-7).

Quite apart from these tremendous words of assurance, see how the Lord does not bother at that stage with the "How" of crossing the Jordan - He and Joshua would deal with that only when the time came. We also see how the Lord is not going to give the land to His people - future tense: He has given it already! - past tense - it's already done as far as He is concerned! (verse 3, AV; some newer translations fudge this tense, thus masking the precious spiritual principle that when God makes a promise it really is "as good as done" in His sight).

And then the Lord emphasised to Joshua what was to be the key to his leadership of God's people. Joshua was not just to be strong and courageous for the sake of it, but SO THAT "thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee" (verse 7a): keeping to God's paths was going to require strength and courage - as is still the case for us. In all the times of tempting and testing that lay ahead, Joshua was not to turn from the law; it was not to "depart out of his mouth"; he was to meditate upon it by day and night (from verses 7-8) . Here is the key to his decision-making, and ours, that it

might be wise, true and successful. Finally the Lord told Joshua, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (verse 9).

What a blessing were these words of the Lord to Joshua, and what a blessing they are for the Lord's people today as we enter another year, the 2016th year since Jesus' incarnation. We too are commanded to be strong and courageous; we too are to meditate on God's Word day and night; and we too are to put into practice all that the Lord tells us in His Word. Then, by the grace of God, we shall remain on His paths, come what may.

Undergirding all is the unchanging Lord God our Creator - never failing, never forsaking, remaining with us wherever we go. No wonder we need not be afraid or dismayed. As the ultimate Joshua - the Lord Jesus Himself - has told us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16.33).

And there's another past tense: Jesus HAS overcome the world - it has HAPPENED, it is DONE! What a comfort and encouragement that is as we step into this new year, praising, trusting and serving the Lord - just like Joshua before us.

© 2015 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org