

Joshua 3:6-17

“Taking a stand”

I. Intro

II. Vs. 6-8 Step out

III. Vs. 9-13 Step up

IV. Vs. 14-17 Step in

I. Intro

The crossing over the Jordan is in three chapters (3-5) of Joshua and based upon this it is obvious that the Lord had a lot to say about this event. The most important part of the crossing appears to be the Ark of the Covenant as it is mentioned over and over. As we go back 40 years to the previous generation we see that when God wanted them to come near Him and the nation didn't then when He invited them again after their rebellion they attempted to come near in their own terms. The common denominator in that tragic sequence was that in both cases it was about the people not drawing near the presence of the Lord. **The Ark is the symbol of the presence of God** to the people and at the beginning of the entrance of the nation into the land of promise two things stand out:

1. **The people were to go after the presence of the Lord:** This suggests that *the promises of God are always to be obtained as we go after more of His presence and desire to be nearer to Him.* This will require death to our self centered lives and the empowerment of the Spirit.
2. Secondly, the fact that the presence of the Lord went **before the people** suggests that God went before the people and desired that they be where He is. In other words, *our Lord wants us close to Him more than we desire to be near Him.*

Looking at God's command to **“Go After it”** and the rest of this chapter you see that you got to be willing to:

- Vs. 6-8 **Step out of your self**
- Vs. 9-13 **Step up in faith**
- Vs. 14-17 **Step in the Holy Spirit**

II. Vs. 6-8 Step out

Vs. 6 At Joshua's command the priests took up the ark and head out into the water of the Jordan. Historically the Jordan was around 100 feet wide but during the fall when this crossing took place it would swell over its banks and spread out to around a mile wide. This was no small step of faith for the priests carrying the ark or Joshua who made the command. Remember Joshua told the nation to clean themselves as "*tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you*". It's tomorrow and Joshua needed to act upon the word of God. Nobody said that trusting God and entering into His promise wouldn't require action only that it wouldn't be done in our strength.

It was the priest's responsibility to get their feet wet before God would open the waters. Then we are told that they would have to stand in the middle until all the people passed over. People will never move closer to the presence of God if they don't see those of us called to serve Him be willing to do so ourselves. We need to act upon what God has promised and set out against what is humanly impossible realizing that the Lord is going to do wonders among us if we will but die to self and be immersed in His power. If they had waited a few more month's then they could have waded across but God brings these people to a place of surrender of brokenness and obedience in the face of impossibility! **God wanted more devotion not just more emotion.** So that according to 1 Cor. 1:29 "*that no flesh should glory in His presence.*"

In the account of the parting of the Red Sea the Lord works through Moses using him to perform the miracle but here what we see that Joshua merely issues the command and the Lord does everything else, as he Ark which is symbolic of the presence of the Lord goes before the people. All of this is reminiscent of Zech. 4:6-7 where the word of the Lord came to Zerubbabel: "*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O Great*

Mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"

Vs. 7-8 In Exodus 14:31 we are told of the response of the nation to the work of the Lord in the crossing of the red Sea was that, *"Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses."* Now 40 years later God was about to do the same thing for Joshua that He had done for Moses. Here is what I find interesting **our stature before the people rises when we simply trust the Lord to do the work.**

III. Vs. 9-13 Step up

Vs. 9-10 In these verses Joshua communicates it very positive terms when he says that **the impossible obstacle will become the glorious opportunity of the God to fulfill His promises.** Confidence to overcome seven enemies was to occur when they trusted God against all odds and crossed over. *"The living breathing God will defeat the lifeless idols"*, Joshua proclaims to the people. The name *"Canaanites"* is a biblical term that describes all the inhabitants of Canaan where as the seven tribes listed dwelt in different regions of Canaan such as Perizzites were located in the central area, the Amorites were in the mountain regions, the Girgashites were found in the area near the Sea of Galilee. **According to Gen. 15:16 God had given these people 500 years to repent and they hadn't so now He was going to use the Israelites to drive them from the land.**

His possession of us will enable us to possess His promises and no enemy will be able to stand and resist what God has promised and we have entered into by His Spirit. Notice that there is a domino effect; as we surrender God supplies, then we surrender more and He supplies more. Having instructed the priests, Joshua now shares the word of the Lord to the

people. “*Come here, and hear the words of the Lord your God*”, Joshua said. The focus for Joshua was to get the people to see the incredible blessing of “*going after*” the presence of the Lord living among them. David wrote of the Lord’s encounter in his life saying in Psalm 18:35 “*Your right hand has held me up; Your gentleness has made me great.*” That is what we get to do in response is to magnify the Lord to as Don Cousins says, “*To make God famous*”! My job isn’t to make Calvary famous or myself but to continue to make Him famous. How do we do this? By reminding ourselves of the His promises towards us and encourage ourselves to continue to trust and obey Him. Look at what Joshua tells the people about God:

1. Vs. 10 “*By this you shall know that the living God is among you*”: He is the living God among you who alone can defeat the enemies. I think it is glorious that He can defeat the enemy but I’m personally more amazed that He is the living God among us! I understand that God hates sin but I’m amazed that He wants to hang out with sinners and provide a way by which He can dwell among us.
 2. Vs. 11 “*the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan*”: We are told that He is the Lord of all the earth, which tells mean that; **no one or nothing can stop Him from going and doing what He wants**. How amazing is it to realize that we are one the winning side, nothing can thwart the work of God, victory is our in Christ.
- Vs. 11-13 The tribes had a responsibility to send one-person from each of the 12 tribes and according to 4:2-8 who in turn would take a stone from the midst of the river for an alter of remembrance for future generations. Forty years earlier in Exodus 14:13-14 we are told that at the Red Sea Moses said to the people, “*Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.*”
- Those 3 million Israelites had heard of this story of how the water had parted **before they took a step** as they just “**STOOD STILL**” but this time God was requiring them to “**STAND IN**” (verse 8). There is a big difference saints between “**standing still**” and “**standing in**”! Why did God require nothing ahead of time to cross over the Red Sea but required a step of faith in crossing over the Jordan? **The Red Sea represents our salvation;** where we are leaving the world of sin

and death and that crossing over and all of this is His work as God's provision of the cross of Jesus. *The crossing over into the promises is a work of faith that requires a step of faith before we see. When ever we come to issues of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives it always requires a step of faith on our part.* To "Go After it" you got to be willing to:

- **Step out of your self**
- **Step up in faith**
- **Step in the Holy Spirit**

When we do those three things we will see the Lord do wonders among us! Remember this was NOT wadding in a kiddie pool this wasn't some little brook it was a mile-wide ragging river.

These people had been guided by the cloud by day and the fire by night. They had experienced Manna from heaven but *they awoke this day and there is no longer a pillar of fire, no more cloud or Manna.* Instead, they are told to follow the Ark the presence of the Lord, *that was new and different something they had never gone through before.* Those carrying the Ark weren't the same people who normally carried the Ark. God was doing a new thing a new way and you all know how much we all like change don't we? A new land, a new obstacle, a new leader, a new direction a new way of following the Lord. The key to this was to be found in the words spoken by Joshua in verse 5 "*Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.*" The Lord desires to do wonders, some times the wonders are all the more glorious because He has chosen to do them in a new way. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit in John 7:37-38, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*" Friends there is power, power wonder working power in the presence of the Lord and when you step into Him He takes over.

IV. Vs. 14-17 Step in

Vs. 14-15 Remember the priests were ½ a mile ahead of the rest of the 3 million people they took the steps of faith into the swollen Jordan river. Hey must have felt like they were alone and

on display and you start thinking, “*Now would be a good time to part this water Lord.*” **It wouldn’t be faith if we know how the Lord is going to fulfill what He has promised.** We may not know the “HOW” but we do know the “WHO”!

Unless we step out in faith and get our feet wet we won’t make any progress in moving forward into the land of promise. **They may have stepped into water but according to verse 17 the ark of the covenant stood on dry ground while being in the middle of the Jordan and everyone that walked across on dry ground not mud.** With Moses at the Red Sea it was through an outstretched arm of Moses that the breath of God parted the Sea. But **here it was not an outstretched arm but rather the obedient feet of the People that caused the waters to part.** Vs. 16-17 The manner in which the Lord accomplished this isn’t as important as the timing of the event; which was at the time of their trusting God and obedience moving to where their feet touched the water. The Ark of the Covenant is mentioned 14 times in 17 verses; **this tells us that the presence of the Lord in the midst of the obstacle is what caused the folks to walk on dry ground.**

Joshua gives us the geographical location of where these waters stood still and rose in a heap as it tells us that they did so **20 miles up river.** This suggests that **oft times when the Holy Spirit is working it is out of view from us, up river from where we can see what He is doing and we are just called to walk into what He is already doing by faith without understanding how He is doing it.** The Lord called the priests to step out first and stay in the midst of the Jordan the longest all the while the people walk through? The bible tells us in Rev. 5:10 that the Lord as “made us kings and priests to our God” so friends we are called to “*take a stand*” to stay planted in the overflowing water of the Holy Spirit till everyone passes over on dry ground and into the land of promises. A.W. Tozer said in “The Pursuit of God” that, “*The*

Presence and the manifestation of the Presence are not the same. There can be the one without the other. God is here when we are wholly unaware of it. He is manifest only when and as we are aware of His Presence. On our part there must be surrender to the Spirit of God, for His work it is to show us the Father and the Son. If we co-operate with Him in loving obedience God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a life radiant with the light of His face.”