

Joshua 3:1-5

“Go after it”

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I. Intro

Before us are the clues to entrance into the land of promises, a road map of faith and surrender that if followed 40 years earlier would have granted entrance to a generation that perished in the wilderness. Warren Wiersbe rightly makes this assessment saying, *“In the Christian life you’re either an overcomer or you’re overcome, a victor or a victim.”* *“God didn’t save us to make statues out of us and put us on exhibition. He saved us to make soldiers out of us and move us forward by faith to claim our rich inheritance in Jesus.”* In Deut. 6:23 Moses told the nation that *“He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers.”* Salvation my friends is not the end all it is only the beginning of all in fact in the 13 chapter when Joshua was old and advanced in years the Lord said to him: *“You are old, advanced in years, and **there remains very much land yet to be possessed.**”*

Keep going God told Joshua don’t stop going after it, don’t you love that? Do you realize that the only thing that you can covet more of us the Lord’s presence in your life you and I should never be satisfied with the amount of Him we have! Forty years earlier as the nation was on the brink of entering in they said, *“Lets go back where it was safe”* instead they should have responded as Joshua says here, *“Let’s go after it where the Lord is working”*. Forty years earlier Caleb had told the nation, *“Let’s go up at once and posses it; for we are able to overcome it”* and

the people responded “*we are not able*”. But what they missed was that Caleb was not talking about them doing so in their own strength but rather about trusting God to do so. Friends we are told in 1 Kings 8:56 “*There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.*” Though His promises fail not we far to often fail to trust in the One who has promised and the effect of this is that we never enter into what He has promised.

II. Vs. 1-2 Ready to take the plunge

Vs. 1 After the return of the spies and their pronouncement of victory Joshua wastes no time in giving the nation their marching orders which suggest that he fully believed God was moving them into His promises. It appears that the Lord had the nation of 3 million camp at the Jordan for three days where they could look across at the land of promise contemplate the waste of 40 years of complacency and take a gander at the impossibility of entering into the promises in their own strength.

Early in the morning three million Israelites set out from the place of victory as well as the place where they remembered not to trust in their flesh. Even upon noting the Jordan Rivers condition Joshua didn’t hesitate, which again tells us that he was not stepping out in faith based upon the situation and circumstances being favorable but rather upon the word of God. Even more remarkable is that the leadership and the people don’t seem to object to this despite the circumstances. They traveled ten miles to the banks of the Jordan River which do to the time of year was overflowing its banks. On the other side of the river lay the promises of God, the promises of a land flowing with milk and honey. In Hebrews 11:9 we are told that Abraham “*By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise*”. **For 500 years they had waited for this moment and it would be this generation that would get to appropriate with their ancestors only**

inhabited by faith. It has been well said that, “*Faith is not believing in spite of the evidence it is rather obeying in spite of the consequences*”, *Joshua’s faith* was not going to be a passive feeling it *was going to require an aggressive action.*

Saints do you realize the great privilege we have in living in these days? Peter wrote of this in 1 Peter 1:10-12 saying “*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.*”

Vs. 2 The three days of preparation were over and they were gazing across at fruitful living, of hope and joy must have been in the air. Ah but there was a baptism to go through before they could enjoy the blessings of the promises. In Romans 6:3 we are told that “*as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*” So at our water baptism as we are immersed into the water we are saying that the old man the fallen flesh of our former life won’t be what we are any more. Instead according to Paul’s words in 2 Cor. 5:17 “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” What emotions of the children of those that had died in the wilderness must have had as they gazed across the Jordan and into the land of promise. I can only wonder how this conversation might have gone amongst the 3 million Israelites: “*Alright whose job was it to prepare the watercrafts?*” On top of which they saw the banks were overflowing with the river, “*Hey Josh, maybe you ought to check the weather report next time before you send us on a 10-mile hike.*”

Regrets can be a good thing; times when we take stock of our lives can often propel us to take a step of faith a move forward. Regrets can put to death our complacency. Crossing this river would mean death, a drowning of all that was behind and a walk into the promises which they had never experienced. **The Red Sea spoke of death but it spoke of death that lead to deliverance from bondage, the Jordan's death was the death that we are to do in order that He might live in us in a land of the fullness of the presence of God.**

Now listen up dear ones as true as that is with our identification with Christ in our salvation it is equally true in our sanctification. And if you want those promised blessings of our inheritance we will have to go through yet another baptism this one at the entrance of those promises. A baptism of the Spirit, will require a death, in fact according to Paul in 1 Cor. 15:31 where he proclaims “*I die daily*” it appears that this will be a daily dying to self. Paul wrote to the Galatians in 2:20 “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*” **Friends, there is no other way into the land of promise then the Jordan and no other way to inherit His blessings apart from the baptism of the Holy Spirit and no other way to receive the Holy Spirit then dying to our self centered life.** There are far too many dear saints who have lived outside of what God wants to bless them with simply because they are unwilling to die to self. Friends, if what you want in Christ lies outside your grasp then you must be willing to die to in order to live. Don't expect it to look easy when you are ready to go after the Lord and (*pardon the pun*) **take the plunge** into the land of promise. It will often seem like an impossibility, the wrong season to attempt a crossing; but hear me out friend, “*go after Him*” don't let a little water scare you away from His presence. It is at moments like this

that our intellectual assumptions will get put to the test to see if they will...uh float! Just remember friends “**Faith doesn’t float my friends no it walks on dry ground**”!!!

III. Vs. 3-5 Dying to live

Vs. 3-4 In Exodus 33:14 God had promised the nation saying, “*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*” You see when the nation had moved in the wilderness the ark always went before them to guide them and they were just to seek to be near the presence of the Lord. So? Well, look again at this passage and you read Joshua’s instructions, “*When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.*” Joshua tells the nation when you see the priests carrying the place where the presence of the Lord dwells “*Go after it*”!!!! It’s not going after a specific gift like tongues, or going after a specific experience so you can get those Holy Ghost goose pimples; no he says when you want the more of the presence of the Lord in your “*go after it*”. Oh to God that you and I right now right this moment would just say “*Lord I want more of you and going for it*”! Friends do you realize that our God is on the move, the psalmist says in Psalm 121:4 “*Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*” **The enemy of the inheriting the blessings of God is no other than complacency** as we are told in Proverbs 6:10 “*A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep*”.

They thought they were to go after it and it was only around a ½ of a mile distance. The distance is the same distance that the Levites were to dwell outside the settlements in which they were placed. This speaks to the fact that God wants you to follow Him not push Him or get ahead of Him. “*Lord I want you to do this and that and want you to do so my way*”, many a Christian has been guilty of that. Instead we should say, “*Lord I want more of you I’m going for it but I’m given you the space to do so Your way and timing!*”

Joshua didn't send the Army Corps of engineers first instead he sent the priests? This reveals to us that the Lord saw this as a spiritual problem not an engineering problem. We often fail to enter into the blessings and promises of God because we stand on the banks of an obstacle that is blocking our way and we think we need some feet of engineering but what our real problem is spiritual. The Lord spoke to the nation of Israel through the prophet Isaiah in 59:1-2 saying, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear". The Lord spoke through Isaiah saying, the problem isn't a feet of engineering. No the problem Isaiah says in verse 2 is that their "*iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*" In simple terms get your heart right and go after it.

Notice that Joshua also tells them to make sure that there is a space between the people and the ark of about 1000 yards. Now I think there are two very good reasons for this:

1. To remind them that God is holy: This speaks to them as too who is leading and who is following. We have a tendency, as do all children, to lose respect to those that we have a loving relationship towards. The distance called into attention that our God is not safe; as Mark Buchanan author of "*Your God is to safe would describe*". That is what Mr. Beaver replied when asked concerning Aslan the Lion King in C.S. Lewis' book the "*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*" "*Of coarse He is not safe but He is good*".
2. Second the distance gave the 3 million following a better view of the presence of God. The Lord wants us to get a clear view of His presence in our lives. In Psalm 34:8 the psalmist invites us to "*taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man*

who trusts in Him!” You see the distance wasn’t to obscure the view it was to enhance it so that all could get a glimpse of His glory.

God realized that the nation would never move forward into His promises unless they were **more impressed with His ability than the obstacle that lay before them, more impressed with His ability than their inability.**

Vs. 5 The final admonishment is for personal spiritual preparation as they were to set themselves apart for the going after it. This was not so they could do something but rather so they would be prepared to watch the Lord do wonders among them. After telling them to go after the presence of God, Joshua next tells them to “*sanctify*” themselves the word means to set apart or prepare. In the scripture the sanctifying process was one that was done outwardly to symbolize a work being done inwardly. So they were to bathe and put on clean fresh clothes which was a way of saying that they were making a new beginning with the Lord.

A new beginning came a new time in which they would experience personally the Lord doing wonders among them. In Psalm 77:13-14 we are told, “*Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders*”. If we want to go for it, to seek the blessings that God has for us our motivation needs to be right which desiring more of His presence in our lives. Then we will need to be prepared to be emptied in order to be filled. We are praying to the Lord and saying, “*Come Holy Spirit*” we ought to right after that include the words, “*Empty me of anything that will lessen all that you want to fill up in me*”. The author of Hebrews said it this way, “*Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us,** and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us*”.