

*“The Lord of the All the Earth”*

Joshua 3-4

March 22, 2020

Please turn in your Bibles with me to Joshua chapter 3 as we return to our current series, *“Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary God.”* When we began this series back in February, we really had no idea what extraordinary times we were walking into. But we have an extraordinary God who is more than sufficient to sustain our hope because He is more than sufficient to meet our needs.

The purpose of our series, *“Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary God”* is to build confident faith in the God to whom we pray. And so we have been perusing a Divine photo album, looking at snapshots of God’s great works in extraordinary times throughout scripture to refresh and strengthen our confidence in our great God.

A couple weeks ago, we saw how the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and Pharaoh’s army by parting the Red Sea. Last week, we were encouraged to see the gracious power of God sustaining Israel in the wilderness for 40 years, even though their hardened, grumbling hearts were undeserving of His mercy. This morning we come to Joshua 3-4, where God completes His redemptive work for Israel by parting the Jordan river and bringing the new generation into the Promised Land. What we are about to see is that...

***God demonstrates His power over humanly insurmountable obstacles so that His people might fear Him with confident faith and that all people will know that His hand is mighty.***

**[Joshua 3]**

Our first life principle actually precedes chapter 3 but lays a necessary foundation for our study.

1. **Walking by Faith is only effective when it flows out of a life of obedience to God’s Word (1:5-9).**

Joshua and the people he is leading are in a position where they need to trust God to do some extraordinary things. What we must not overlook is that Joshua’s faith is effectively lived out on the road of obedience to God.

**[Josh 1:5-9]**

God gives Joshua this incredible promise that no enemy will be able to stand before him, because the infinite, almighty God is with him! That doesn’t mean the enemy won’t be intimidating. The first command God gives Joshua is to strong and courageous. That is, to be unwavering in his confident trust in the Lord! And notice that the promise of his success will be based on his obedience to God.

The kind of faith that God is delighted to honor is the faith of those who are walking in obedience to His Word. True faith is not just wishful thinking or merely trusting God for whatever we think God wants. Effective faith begins with knowing *what* to trust God for and that means we need to immerse ourselves in the Bible so we know His promises, His purposes, His ways, and His character, thereby instructing us in the way in which we should trust Him. *Faith advances on the feet of obedience.*

2. **The first step of walking by faith is recognizing our insufficiency apart from God’s intervention (1-4).**

When you immerse yourself in the Bible, you begin to discover that God tends to “bless” His people with extreme circumstances that are impossible apart from God’s intervention (Red Sea; Goliath; fiery furnace; lion’s den).

And this is where Israel finds themselves before the Jordan River. We know from vs. 1-2 that they camped there 3 days. We are not told why. Perhaps they were tired from their journey or maybe the 40,000 mentioned in 4:13 needed to get organized for potential war once in the land. But one thing we can assume. Those 3 days gave them ample time to ponder how humanly impossible it would be to cross the Jordan apart from miracle.

We know from vs. 15 that the Jordan is at its peak flood stage. God has led them to the river and told them to cross it at the worst time, humanly speaking, so that He can demonstrate the greatness of His power!

Your faith in God will be diminished by the degree that you think you can do it on your own. The best place for us to live is within the healthy tension between two essential truths we find in the gospels. Jesus said, “*apart from Me you can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5), yet “*with God all things are possible*” (Mt 19:26). Between these truths is where we need to stand and that is precisely the place where Joshua stands to trust in the Lord.

**3. Where you stand in relationship to God is more important than where you stand in relationship to your circumstances (5-6).**

**[vs. 5-6]** Vs. 5 is all about standing before God in a state of cleanliness. God is about to manifest His presence and power before them; to do wonders among them as the holy, almighty God. So Joshua instructs them to bathe themselves and refrain from anything that would defile them. That is, they are to conduct themselves in light of God’s holiness. The most important issue is not how they are going to get across the Jordan, but where they stand in relationship to God. And that is always the most important matter in your life. Whether God parts your Jordan or not, whether he delivers you from death or not, the most important thing is where you stand in relationship to God.

We already saw at the beginning of our series that any discussion of an effective life of faith and prayer must begin right here. Ps 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” Stated positively, James says, “the effective prayer of the righteous man accomplishes much” (5:16). In the words of I Peter, “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (3:12). My friends, the only way to stand before God with a clean heart is to be one with Christ through repentance and faith. God looks with favor *only* on those who are in Christ. *Where you stand in relationship to God determines where you stand in relationship to your problem.*

**4. The foundation of our confidence in God is that He is the Lord of all the earth without rival (7-13).**

**[vs. 7-13]**

In vs 10 Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the *living* God is among you and He will assuredly...” give you victory over the 7 nations in Canaan. In other words, God’s display of power in parting the Jordan is meant to give Israel confidence to trust God to deliver them in the face of every enemy.

Ultimately their confidence is based not just on what God can do but who God is. In vs. 10, He is the “living God.” The absence of the Hebrew article puts the emphasis on “living.”<sup>1</sup> All the other nations serve false gods (idols). But Israel comes in the name of the one, true, living God. And the living God, according to vs. 11 and 13, is not only the Lord of all the earth (and therefore without rival), but He is in a covenant relationship with Israel. Israel’s only need is to walk in obedience faith in God, who is the Lord of all the earth. His authority is singular and His power unmatched!

**5. No element of creation can hinder the Creator from acting on behalf of those who trust in Him (14-17).**

Notice that when the people started toward the Jordan (vs. 14), God had not yet parted the river. They are walking by faith and obedience to God’s command. Not until the priests stepped into the flooding river, did God act. Because God values both faith and obedience He gives them time to exercise their faith and work out their obedience. We want God to hurry up but He is purposefully patient. He will make the trial long enough to fulfill the purposes He has for the trial.

And don’t miss the wonder of what happened there! Imagine being one of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant. As soon as you step into the water, it begins to recede. You take another step into what should be deeper water only for it to recede further. Soon you are standing in the

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Madvig, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol 3: Joshua*. Pg. 266.

middle of the river bottom on dry ground. Then you look up river, and miles in the distance, you see a growing tower of water like a wall! *That is your God!* In that moment your heart is gripped with a sense awe and fear, deep reverence, as you comprehend that no element of nature can hinder the unseen hand of God on behalf of His people. That moment should inform every prayer for the rest of your life! God can do whatever He pleases, by whatever means He pleases!

Not every prayer we pray will be met with a Jordan-like miracle, but every prayer should have the confidence that God is completely unlimited in His ability to intervene and He's unlimited by the means in which He does it. So stand in the Jordan and let it teach you how to pray!

6. **God's work in our lives should be commemorated for the formation of our faith and the advancement of God's fame** (4:1-7; 19-24).

#### [4:1-7, 19-24]

Whenever God intervenes in your life circumstances, it is never just about those circumstances. It is meant strengthen your faith, to form the faith of your children, and to be a testimony to the people in your life, that your God is living and powerful. So be careful to mark and remember what God has done.

This is why God instructed Joshua to create a monument with rocks from the river bottom. It was a reminder of what God had done. It was to inform them and their children that God is be trusted with the impossible. And it was a message to all the earth that God's hand is mighty.

The message of Joshua 3-4 and the meaning of the Jordan crossing is clearly articulated in vs. 23-24: ***The Lord Your God dried up the waters of the Jordan...just as He had done to the Red Sea, "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so that you may fear the Lord your God forever"*** (Josh 4:23-24).

As we live in the midst of a growing coronavirus outbreak, it is creating disruption and trials for people that will probably only increase for a time. Yet for God's people, as we pray and trust in the Lord, this should be a season in which testimonies are being birthed of God's provision, care, and sustaining grace. (ie. Gene and Judy, building a testimony in Guatemala). As God answers prayer and meets our needs during this trying season, we need to share what God has done. It strengthens faith and the fear of God in *our* hearts, and it testifies to the mighty hand of God for those who are yet to trust in Him.

7. **God's redemptive acts for Israel are a mere foretaste of Christ's redemptive work for us** (4:23-24).

The significance of the Jordan crossing is marked in vs. 23 by its close association with the Red Sea crossing 40 years earlier (cf. Psalm 114). The parting of the Red Sea and the parting of the Jordan River are redemptive bookends on this season of Israel's life. By parting the Red Sea, God brought His people out of bondage and slavery in Egypt. By parting the Jordan River, God brought them into the promised land.

But what does that have to do with us as NT believers? The God of OT Israel, the God of Moses and Joshua is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of all who are adopted into the family of God through faith in Christ.

So the Red Sea and Jordan crossings are part of the heritage of every person who loves Christ. Yet in Christ we have a greater, fuller redemption. Through the death of Christ we are brought out of the slavery of sin and through His resurrection are brought into the promise of eternal life. God has bridged an eternal gap for us far greater than the Red Sea and flooding Jordan combined.

If God worked so graciously on behalf of the Israelites, certainly He will do no less for His blood-bought children who are one with Christ and trust in Him.

Prayer Challenge: *“Lord, as I trust You to work out this situation, don’t stop short of strengthening my confidence in You and showing others how great You are!”*

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Pause for your prayer with those gather in your home! What’s your Jordan river today?