

TIMELESS TRUTHS TO REMEMBER WHEN ENTERING A NEW YEAR (Part 1)

INTRODUCTION (Abbreviated):

Today is January 7th, 2018—the first Sunday of the new year. Are you going to have a “good” 2018—or a “bad” one? I think you’d agree that we don’t know because to a large degree, we can’t **control** what happens to us. On the other hand, we **can** have a huge impact on whether or not we have a successful 2018. Why? Because we can control what we *attempt* to do—and to a large degree whether we *accomplish* what we attempt to do....

Take your Bibles and turn to Joshua 1. This morning I want to draw a correlation between Joshua entering the Promised Land and us entering the New Year. Although it would be a misapplication of God’s Word to suggest that God’s promise to Joshua that he would possess the land equates to First Baptist Church “capturing” all of Necedah for Christ, there are some timeless truths in Joshua 1 that can impact whether or not you and I have a successful 2018.

1. Timeless Truth #1: **Losses from the past** shouldn’t stop us from going ahead with the Lord

--We see that in verse 2; the first words that God declares to Joshua as He appoints him the successor of Moses. God did not deny the reality of Moses’ death; instead He seemed to emphasize it.

A. The Reality of Loss

--Did Joshua know Moses was dead? Of course, he did; Deut 34:8 says they just spent 30 days mourning his death!

--So why did God tell Joshua something he already knew? Because God wanted to remind Joshua that He understood that the reality of Moses’ death would greatly affect Joshua and the people. Moses had been their leader for 40 years—the entire life-time of many of those that Joshua would now lead!

B. The Remembrance of Lessons from the one lost

--The task assigned to Joshua of taking God’s people into the Promised Land was a daunting one. God’s reminder to Joshua that Moses was dead was not to overwhelm him; it was not to put him into the depths of despair. Instead, it was to remind Joshua of some things he could learn from the life of Moses.

--God reminded Joshua that Moses was **His servant**. God did not just say “Moses is dead;” rather, He said, “Moses my servant is dead.” (See also verse 7, 13, 15)

What a wonderful reminder to Joshua—and to us! It is almost as if God is saying to Joshua, “Don’t focus on Moses as your former leader—think of him as MY servant and now **you** are my servant! I appointed him—and now I am appointing you. Moses was a servant of God—and that is what you need to be too!”

--Another thing God wanted Joshua to remember about Moses was that **God was with him**—and promised to be with Joshua (verse 5, 9, 17)

--There is yet a third thing that I believe God wanted Joshua to remember about Moses, but it is not as obvious as the two we just looked at. Why wasn’t Moses going into the Promised Land with them? Because he was dead. But why was he dead? We actually have the answer in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy: “Because ye trespassed against me [God] among the children of Israel” (verse 51).

Although God does not say “Don’t disobey me like Moses did,” God does emphasize obedience. Notice verse 7—“that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law.” God then adds, “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left.” In other words, don’t deviate—do it all. Verse 8 says Joshua was to meditate on the law “that thou mayest observe to DO ALL that is written therein.” Verse 9: “Have not I commanded thee?”

C. Now the Response to the loss

--So how did Joshua respond to the loss of Moses and his commissioning from God? In verse 2 God said, “Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.” In verse 10 we see Joshua instructing the officers to get ready for battle, in verse 12 he reminds the 2-1/2 tribes of their obligation to help the other 9-1/2 tribes, in chapter 2 Joshua sends out spies, in chapter 3 they cross the Jordan River, and in chapter 6 we see them capturing the city of Jericho. In a nutshell, Joshua obeyed—he did not let the loss of Moses stop him from going ahead with the Lord.

Some of you are familiar with Elisabeth Elliot, a wonderful Christian woman who is now with the Lord, and how her husband and 4 other men were killed by the Auca Indians of east Ecuador in 1956. She wrote the following: “When I went back to my jungle station after the death of my first husband, Jim Elliot, I was faced with many confusions and uncertainties. I had a good many new roles, besides that of being a single parent and a widow. I was alone on a jungle station that Jim and I had manned together. I had to learn to do all kinds of things, which I was not trained or prepared in any way to do. It was a great help to me simply to *do the next thing.*”

That was a motto of hers: “do the next thing.” She pushed through the feelings and did the next thing that God wanted her to do for the remainder of her life, part of which was spent working with—and befriending—some of the very men who killed her husband!

2. Timeless Truth #2: **God has enemies**

--Must not forget that the Promised Land was not an empty land; it was not unoccupied wilderness that God’s people were just going to lay claim to. No; it was a land where cities were already built and they were going to destroy the people who lived in those cities.

--We see in verse 4 that they would be conquering the land of the Hittites

--In verse 5 we see God’s promise that “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee.”

In other words, no one who fights against you will win.

--In verse 14 it says that “all the mighty men of valor” were to be armed

Why would God want His people to kill other people and take over their territory? Because of their sin!

--In Deut 9:5, God says it was not because of the righteousness of His people, “but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out before thee...”

--In Deut 18:10-12 we get insight into what that wickedness was—they practiced witchcraft and cast spells; they pretended to predict the future by inspecting the insides of animals; they conversed with dead; and they offered children as sacrifices to demons.

--May I remind you that God **still** has enemies—and so do we! Satan, of course, is our adversary that walks about seeking whom he may devour. Paul reminded the Ephesian believers that “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

--It is also my duty to remind you that if you are not a child of God—if you are not born again; if you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior—you, too, are an **enemy** of God. There are two spiritual families in the world—God and Satan’s. You are in one or the other. If you are in God’s family, you are a child of God; if you are in Satan’s family, you are an enemy of God. It is really that simple.

--It is not a pleasant thing to think about—or preach about—but it is a Bible truth nonetheless. I don’t care how kind you are, or nice you are, or sweet you are, or thoughtful you are—you have sinned against God and if you are trying to get to heaven by your own efforts, you are saying NO to God—and He is against you! Paul said to the Romans “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom 5:10).

3. Timeless Truth #3—***Although the battle is the Lord’s, we still have a responsibility***

A. God was giving them the land (v 2, 3, 11, 13, 15)

Although God was giving His people the land,

B. They still had to fight!

--V 11 they were instructed to “Prepare you victuals”; v 14 “but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them”

--In Josh 6 we read that when Jericho was captured, they destroyed all that was in the city “with the edge of the sword” (v 21)

Let’s pause here and think about this for a moment. God was giving them this land—and could have “cleared” the land in a supernatural way. He could have sent a plague that wiped out all His enemies—or He could have used the news that God’s people were coming against them and caused them to flee out of fear. Why didn’t He choose to do that? One reason is given in Exodus 23:29-30.

Fast forward to now. What is our battle; what is the war we are in? As mentioned earlier, our battle is not one of flesh and blood; ours is a **spiritual** battle over the souls of men. Satan and his fellow demons are trying to deceive people and drag them to hell; we are laborers together with God to rescue people from the powers of darkness and see them “translated”—meaning transferred—into the kingdom of His Dear Son (Col 1:13).

How does God want that battle to be fought? It is our job—our battle mission—to obey the command of Jesus to go and preach the gospel to every creature. The results are up to Him, but giving out the good news that people can be rescued from eternal punishment and have forgiveness of sins and a home in heaven is up to us.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

1. Christian; are you serving God the way God wants you to? It doesn’t matter what I want; it does matter what God wants. If you aren’t doing what God wants you to do, what are you waiting for? Don’t wait for God’s 2 x 4 to get your attention—do it now!

2. Are you in God’s family—or are you His enemy? I stated this earlier, but it bears repeating—if you are trying to get to heaven by your works—by what you do—you are fighting against God and are His enemy! Stop fighting God; stop insisting on trying to get to heaven YOUR way. Jesus is the only way—I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6).