

TIMELESS TRUTHS TO REMEMBER WHEN ENTERING A NEW YEAR (Part 2)

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we looked at Joshua 1 and made somewhat of a correlation between Joshua entering the Promised Land and us entering a New Year. It was a new chapter in their history and God chose this “new beginning” to remind them of some things that would help them face the “unknowns” that lie ahead of them.

Although 2018 began two weeks ago, there are obviously a lot of “unknowns” in the 50 weeks that remain. We don’t know if it will be a “good” year or a “bad” year because we don’t know what will happen to us and we can’t control what happens to us. We can, however—at least to a certain degree—control whether or not we have a **successful** year. God gave Joshua instructions on how to successfully conquer the Promised Land—there were certain things he would have **to do**. God also gave Joshua some reminders—some “timeless truths”—that he would need to keep in mind as he led God’s people into battle. Because they are “timeless truths,” they also serve as reminders to us and can help us have a successful 2018.

1. First, losses from the past shouldn’t stop us from going ahead with the Lord (Josh 1:2)

Application: We are bound to suffer some kind of loss—or at least disappointment—in the upcoming year. It may be income, a vehicle, health, possessions—or even a loved one. Are we going to stop living for God because we lose something or someone? God expected Joshua to keep on serving Him and expects us to do the same.

2. Secondly, we noted that God has enemies (Josh 1:4, 6,14)

Application: God still has enemies—and so do we! Satan hates us and wants to destroy us—he wants us to fall into sin and be enslaved by sin. Although Satan tricks us into thinking sin will make us happy, he knows it will not and has no desire that we be happy. He wants us ineffective and miserable—and those that are unsaved he wants to keep blinded by their sin and drag them to hell with him!

3. Thirdly, we saw that although the battle is the Lord’s, we still have a responsibility.

--God was **giving them** the land we are told in verses 2, 3, 11, 13, and 15—yet they still had to fight.

Application: God has a job for us to do that also involves a battle. It is not against flesh and blood; however, it is **spiritual** warfare.

--Satan deceives people into thinking there *is no God* and there is no hell—we need to warn them that God is real and hell is real and that people will join Satan there.

--Satan deceives those who *believe in God* into thinking that they can get to heaven their own way on their own terms—we need to warn them that Jesus is the way—the only way—and they will not get there without Him!

--And Satan lulls *God’s children* into thinking that it is somebody else’s job to tell the lost how to get saved, neglecting the fact that God commands each one of us to share the good news that sinful man can be forgiven by God.

4. Timeless Truth #4—**God wants to bless His people**

God was reminding Joshua that although Moses was dead, God still wanted to bless His people.

A. Blessing in OT

Land (verses 2, 3, 4, 6); power over enemies (v 5); prosperity and success (v 7, 8)

B. Blessing in NT: God still wants to bless His people. Jesus said in John 10:10 “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” So what does blessing look like in the NT?

i. What NT blessing is **not**

--Not in conquering people and taking over their land

--Not in material wealth and accumulating lots of things (Lk 12:15; I Tim 6:8-9; Heb 13:5)

ii. What NT blessing **is**

--Although it is not in an **abundance** of riches and wealth, it does include having our **needs** met (Mt 6:33; Phil 4:19)

--God's blessings now, though, are primarily **spiritual** in nature (Eph 1:3)

Current blessings: Fullness of joy (John 15:11); peace with God (Romans 5:1); peace in circumstances (Phil 4:7); Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

Future blessings: Being with Jesus in heaven (John 14:1-3); being sin-free (I John 3:2); being sorrow free and pain free (Rev 21:4)

Isn't God good? God still wants to bless His people—just like He did in Joshua's day. In one sense God blesses *everyone*. Jesus said that the Father "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust" (Mt 5:45). The promises of forgiveness, and joy, and peace, and a home in heaven, and being sin-free, and pain-free and sorrow free **do not** come on everyone, however—they only are promised to His children.

Are you a child of God? Have you been born again into His family? If not, you will not enjoy these blessings; they are reserved for His people. Timeless Truth #4—God wants to bless His people.

2. Timeless Truth #5—**Blessing from God—prosperity and success—comes from obeying God**

God wants to bless His people—and there is no one that can stop Him from doing so—except us! It is impossible to miss the fact that blessing **from** God is tied to obedience **to** God (Josh 1:6-7)

Shouldn't surprise us that obedience brings blessing because we've both experienced it and practiced it.

--Some of us have raised animals. My wife and I are currently dog-less, but used to have 2 rat-terrier/chihuahua mixes. Oreo in particular would love to knock over—and dig in—the garbage. Upon discovery, we would NOT give Oreo a treat for being a good dog!

--As children, very few of us were rewarded for being "naughty." When I was a boy, I would sometimes misbehave at the dinner table. I honestly can't remember what I did, but I sure do remember the consequences—going upstairs until everyone else was done eating, then eating by myself. Cold mashed potatoes—and no microwave!

--Good parents don't reward their children for disobedience (notice I said good parents 😊)! They do, however—at least with praise—reward their children when they do right and obey. On the flip side, how many of us had planned on doing something special for our children, but decided not to because of their attitude or outright disobedience. Why should it be any different with God?

Is God blessing you? Do you have that peace that passes all understanding—or is God pointing out areas of disobedience in your life?

3. Timeless Truth #6—*The ingredients of obedience*

After God stresses to Joshua—twice—the importance of obedience, God gives Joshua some keys regarding obedience; what I'm calling the *ingredients of obedience*.

A. Strength and courage are ingredients of obedience. Three times—verses 6, 7, and 9—God instructs Joshua to “be strong and of good courage”—and in verse 18, the people ask the same of Joshua.

Why did God want Joshua to be strong and courageous? One answer is given in verse 7—“that thou mayest observe **to do** according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee...” In other words, strength and courage are needed to obey.

It would take courage for Joshua to obey God; to do things that didn't make sense. They didn't use boats to cross the flooded Jordan River—God told them that when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant put their feet in the water, the water upriver would stand in a heap (3:13) and the people would cross over the dried-up river bed.

It took courage and strength to follow God's plan to capture Jericho—to march around the city once a day for six days—then seven times on the seventh day.

The same is true for us, isn't it? It takes courage and strength for us to obey God in our day to day living—whether we are a leader like Joshua or not! What's the old saying: “Remember, a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.”

i. It takes courage and strength to obey God when He wants you to **stop doing** certain things.

--I came from an alcohol-drinking family and actually drank more after I was saved than before.

--Main reason—saved when I was 12.

--Played high school sports and didn't drink during school year—but did after graduation

--But when God made it plain He wanted me to stop, it took courage and strength to do that.

--My family and friends did not understand at first; some probably blamed it on my wife

--The Bible says that we should expect people to wonder about changes we make after

we are saved (1 Pet 4:4)

--It takes courage and strength to stop drinking, or swearing, or smoking, or watching what you shouldn't. I cannot decide that for you, but when God puts His finger on your heart, you need to **obey**.

ii. Not only does it take courage and strength to stop doing certain things, it also takes courage and strength to obey God when He wants you to **start doing** certain things.

--It takes courage and strength to discipline little ones and try to raise them for God

--It takes courage and strength to give to God's work when you don't feel you can afford it

--It takes courage and strength to love a family member who has wronged you

--It takes courage and strength to confront people & tell them what they are doing is wrong

--It takes courage and strength to witness to people about their need for Christ

--It takes courage and strength to preach God's Word and lead God's people

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

1. God wants to bless His people—but not everyone is a member of God's family. Are you? Are you 100% certain that if you died today you would go to heaven? If not, you ought to get that settled today.

2. Christian, are you obeying God? Is there something that God is putting His finger on in your life that He wants you to stop doing—or to start doing? Don't presume on His long-suffering and mercy any longer—obey Him and have the peace of God that passes all understanding.