

WHAT PRICE ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY FOR GUARANTEED SUCCESS?

INTRODUCTION (Abbreviated):

On February 8th—about 3 weeks from now—the winter Olympics will begin. Are any Olympians **guaranteed** success? Not hardly. There are no “shoo-ins” because even the world’s greatest athletes can have an “off” day. The training that Olympians put in to prepare for success is nothing short of amazing. Jessica Ennis—a 2012 gold medal winner from Britain—is said to have put in 10,000 hours of training in the 4 years leading up to the Olympics. Michael Phelps—the most decorated Olympian of all time with 28 medals—swam 50 miles/week. He trained 6 hours/day; 6 days/week. He was so dedicated/disciplined that even if Christmas Day fell on a training day, he put in his 6 hours. When training, he consumed 12,000 calories/day—6 times what an average man needs! Regardless of the time put in, though, success was not guaranteed.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, though, that those that “striveth for the mastery”—that work hard to achieve success—do it for a corruptible crown. It may be a precious medal, but it will not last forever and they most certainly “can’t take it with them,” so to speak.

As we once again look at Joshua 1 and the instructions Joshua received prior to entering the Promised Land, I want us to consider this question this morning: *What Price are you willing to pay to have Guaranteed Success?*

In the way of a brief review, last time we looked at 3 timeless truths that God conveyed to Joshua:

1. First we noted that God **wants to bless His people**.
2. Second, we saw that **blessing from God—prosperity and success—comes from obeying God**
3. Third, we looked at **the ingredients of obedience**

A. The attitude for obedience—strength and courage

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. It obviously takes strength and courage to obey or God wouldn’t have said it to Joshua 3 times! It takes strength and courage to **stop** doing things God doesn’t want us to do anymore; it also takes strength and courage to **start** doing things God wants us to do.

As we move forward in God’s instructions to Joshua regarding obedience, we note that in addition to the *attitude* needed for obedience,

B. There is also the authority for obedience: the Word of God (verses 7, 8, 9)

Who do you obey? Some of you might be thinking, “I am an adult; I don’t obey anyone.” Is that true? No; we are all under some kind of **authority**. If we have a job; we have to obey the wishes of our employer or we can find ourselves out of a job. If we drive a car; we have to obey the laws of the land or we can find ourselves out of some money (called a “ticket”). If we go to a store; we usually try to obey the rules of decency and politeness by waiting our turn in line and being friendly to those who take our money. (Funny that we have to wait for people to take our money:). If we are married, we have to.... (you don’t really think I’m going to finish that, do you...lol...????)

So, do we obey God—or do we obey someone else? We all obey someone; the question is who? God made it very clear that Joshua was to obey God and what God said. Joshua had other options, of course.

--Instead of obeying what God said, Joshua could have obeyed the whims of the people.

--Instead of obeying God, Joshua could have obeyed **himself**. Can a person obey themselves? We often don't think of us obeying ourselves, but if **we** decide what is right and if **we obey** that which we decide is right, are we not **obeying** ourselves?

One of the Baptist distinctives is that the Bible is the **sole rule** of faith and practice. It is not the Bible plus tradition; it is not the Bible plus our opinion; and it is not the Bible plus the whims of the majority. It is the Bible—"God said it; that settles it!"

--It's the Word of God that makes us "wise unto salvation" we are told in II Tim 3:15

--According to II Tim 3:16, it's the Word of God that is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness

--And it's the Word of God that gives us the exceeding great and precious promises and makes us partakers of the divine nature according to II Peter 1:3

C. The aim of obedience: why obey? What is our motivation in obeying? Do we obey out of fear—or do we obey out of a desire to please someone?

I've shared this with you before, but I think it helps make the point. As a boy, I remember obeying my Dad out of fear—I did not want to get into trouble. I then remember moving on from that to doing things that pleased him. Why? At first, I'm sure it was so that I would get things in return. Growing up I loved to hunt and fish and my thought process was this: If I did some extra work around our small farm, he would hopefully take me hunting or fishing, depending on the season. In other words, I would do things that pleased him in hopes of him doing things for me. As I got older, I remember "graduating" (if I can use that word) from this mindset to wanting to please him because I loved him.

Do you strive to please God? If so, why? I hope you are **not** attempting to please God in hopes of making Him feel "obligated" to save you! God is obligated to NO ONE! There is no scale where good and bad works are weighed—but there is a book called "the Book of Life." If your name is written there you are allowed entrance. If it is not there, you will not get in.

Whose names are in the book of life? Those who have trusted Jesus and Jesus alone for the forgiveness and payment of their sins. I John 5:11-12 "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Do you have the Son? Just knowing about Him is not enough. There has to have been a time in your life when you recognized that you were a sinner and could not save yourself and you turned from your own efforts to save you and put your faith and trust in what Jesus did on the cross.

D. The approach to obedience: meditation

How do you please someone? Not overly difficult; children seem to figure it out at a pretty young age. Here it is: If you want to please someone, you avoid doing that which annoys them and you attempt to do that which they like. Pretty profound, eh?

The difficulty comes in discovering—and then remembering—what pleases the person you are trying to please. Think about when you were first "in love"—if you have been. You worked hard at discovering what pleased the other person, then would roll it over and over in your mind in order to remember. You would also think about different ways you could do whatever it was that pleased the other person. There was a preoccupation with the other person and what it was that pleased them.

How do we please God? The same way we please people—avoid doing what annoys and do that which pleases. How do we **know** what pleases God? We need to meditate on—consider often in our minds—what God has revealed to us about Himself! God’s Word tells us what pleases Him and what displeases Him; we have been given all we need for life and godliness.

How serious are you about pleasing God? Do you read what He has told you about Himself and roll it over in your mind how you can carry it out? Do you think about pleasing Him when you start your day—then set out to do those things? The idea of meditating is like a cow chewing its cud—he regurgitates it from his stomach into his mouth so he can chew on it some more. We are to have God’s Word in our heart so we can think about it and talk about it “day and night.” In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we read, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in **thine heart**: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Again, I ask, how serious are you about knowing what pleases and displeases God? One of the most extreme instances of determination I’ve ever read was about a man named Mr. McPherson who lost both eyes and both arms in an explosion in a Colorado mine. “They told him he was going to die, but he lived. Having no fingers or arms with which to read Braille, he had a special table made so that he could learn to read Braille **with his tongue!**” That, my friends, is a determination to know what pleases God. (G Preaching on NY; 64)

E. The award of obedience: success

--last part of v 7 “that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest.”

--last part of v 8 “for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” There it is: the guarantee—the promise from God—that Joshua would prosper and have good success. What would success look like for Joshua? Driving out Gods’ enemies; conquering the Promised Land. The promise of success was conditional, however, meaning Joshua had to do something in order for it to take place. What was it that he had to do? Meditate on God’s Word for the purpose of doing God’s Word.

Does God make the same promise to us? He most certainly does. This promise is repeated in Psalm 1. We won’t turn there, but the Bible says that those whose “delight is in the law of the Lord” and who “meditates day and night” will be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

Success and prospering for us does not mean we conquer lands or accumulate wealth, however. We will have our physical needs met, but our success will be primarily in the spiritual realm. Despair will be conquered by comfort; disappointment will be replaced with hope; and guilt will be replaced with peace—knowing all is well between us and God. Success will also mean seeing God active in our daily lives and doing things with us and for us. But just like Joshua, we have a part in our own success: knowing—and doing—what pleases God.

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS:

1. Are you saved? That is the first thing God wants you to obey. If you are successful in the eyes of the world—if you have fame or money or power but lose your own soul—you have lost everything—forever!
2. Christian, **who** are you trying to please? Do you wake up seeking to please God? Throughout the day do you think of ways to please God? Do you read His Word to know what you should do to please Him? If not; why not? What are you waiting for?