

## **A Chronicle of Redemption**

Chapter 10: Courage that Conquers

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### **CHAPTER 10: COURAGE THAT CONQUERS** **Joshua 1:1-9**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, then I invite you to open with me to Joshua 1. I cannot tell you how thankful I am to be a part of this faith family. Being out last week, I always miss this faith family when I'm not here, but anyway, not just because I miss worshipping with this faith family, but I am just thankful to be a part of what God is doing in our midst and what God is doing through your lives. We...I have a lot to learn...a lot to learn together...but to spend the last two weeks talking about going into the inner-city with the gospel, and for us to be at a point where we would challenge one another to pray and to ask God, every single one of us, if He is leading us to move into East Lake or Gate City. I hope you have been praying that.

You know, I got a few e-mails that said something about some sleepless nights as a result of praying that, but this is a good thing to pray. If you still have not prayed and waited for an answer, ask God, "Do you want me, or do you want my family to move into East Lake or Gate City?" If we're not willing to pray that, then what does that mean? You think about it: it means we don't really trust God. I'm not saying that every single one of us God would lead to move, but...but we must all be at a point where we are willing to say, "I'll do whatever you want," because if we're not, then that would seem to indicate that we trust our community and our school system and our safety that we can manufacture more than we trust God Himself.

God is worthy of our trust. He's good. We don't ever have to be afraid of asking God, "Do you want me to do this?" because He's our Father. He wants what is best for us and for Him. He does not want the worst for us. He wants the best for us, and so we never have to be afraid to ask God, "What do you want me to do? With no strings attached, I'll do whatever."

This is the beauty of the gospel. This isn't even something we grow into our Christianity. This is it. This is basic Christianity. Jesus said, "If you're going to come after me, you've got to give up everything you have." You've got to deny yourself. Take up a cross. You've got to die to yourself and your own ideas and your own thoughts. You're dead to those. If you're a follower of Christ, you're dead to these things and, "Follow me," He says.

It's the beauty of the gospel. Remember Matthew 13:44. Don't ever forget Matthew 13:44. This is, like, sermon before the sermon, but it's worth it. Matthew 13:44...you remember a man walking in a field, and he stumbles upon a treasure that is worth more than everything he has or could ever have. Nobody else sees the treasure, and so he brushes it over, and he goes and what does he do? He sells everything he has, and the text says he does it with gladness. He gladly gives up everything he has. People coming up to him, saying, "You're nuts. What are you doing? You're selling everything you have." He says, "I'm going to buy that field over there."

They said, "You're crazy. What are you going to buy that field for?" He looks at them with a smile on his face, and he says, "I've got a hunch." Because inside, he knows that he had found something worth losing everything for, and, brothers and sisters, we have found someone worth losing everything for. So, there's no need for us to hold on to stuff of this world and pursuits of this world. We have in Christ superior satisfaction and joy and delight, more valuable than everything, even the best things of this world put together.

So, we believe this gospel, and as a result, there is no room for pew-sitting Christianity. The last thing we are here to do is to keep a seat. Like, we're living out the gospel, which means we left behind a nice, comfortable Christian spin on the American dream, and we are going to radically abandon our lives to follow after Christ, and in the process, we're going to discover that He is far more valuable than all the stuff we once held on to.

So, let's pray that together. If you have not honestly prayed that, let me encourage you this week, in your walk with God, to examine why you have not said, "God, I...we, will do this if this is what you want us to do." Then, once that blank check is before Him and God brings us to a new point, maybe even a surrender, then there's a freedom in knowing that your life is not your own. Anyway, okay, that's the end of the sermon before the sermon.

## **The Radical Experiment**

You know, it was the end of last week, if you're walking through *Operation World*, which I hope you are...if not, jump in now...but end of last week, praying for Brunei, I'm guessing there were some of us who didn't know there was a Brunei. A little country, 400,000 people, east of Malaysia. If you were praying through, you saw how many Christians...now, the main people group in Brunei is the Malay people group. How many Christians are there in the Malay people group in Brunei? There's zero. It is 100 percent Muslim, and they are doing everything they can to make sure it stays that way.

A Christian cannot even come into the country to visit. No Bibles allowed in. Every single school teaches only Islam when it comes to religion, and you and I, in our families, in our homes, have the opportunity to fall on our faces in Birmingham, Alabama and pray for a gospel breakthrough in Brunei and to be a part of the gospel and glory of Christ invading Brunei. From our knees and our faces, we need to do that, to pray for the entire world, so that's what we're doing. This last week, we were in Brunei, in Burkina Faso and in Cameroon and Cambodia and Canada and Central African Republic. So, we're praying for the entire world.

Second, to read through the entire Word. I just love where our Bible reading is bringing us to, especially, this month as we're thinking about where God is leading us. Like, I could have never planned it this good. Works out well to read the Bible. So, we're reading through the entire Word. Third, to spend our time in other context. Let me encourage you, yet again, to sign up for a global trip, to go somewhere in North America, overseas, to go into some other context with the gospel during this year.

Let me jump ahead for a second. In just a second, we're going to talk about India, but I want to make sure it's clear. India is not the only place we're going globally. There are numerous...innumerable opportunities to go into other contexts. So, as individuals, families, small groups, pray, okay? God, where do you want us to go into another context?

Fourth, to commit our lives to multiplying community. The way we impact nations for the glory of God is by making disciples. That happens in the context of relationships, and so we need to be intentional about being in a community that is multiplying the gospel. That's what small groups are all about. So, if not involved in the small group, let me plug again: get involved in a small group.

Then, fifth, to sacrifice our money for a specific purpose. The picture we've talked about, again, is that as individuals and families, we're freeing up our resources to give to the church. So, we are making personal sacrifices...saving...cuts in our individual budgets across this room, so we can have more to give, and then as a church, with our budget as a faith family, we are freeing our resources to give to urgent spiritual and physical need in the world. To spend them in a concentrated way in two areas: locally, in inner-city Birmingham, which is what we talked about the last two weeks. Going into East Lake, Gate City.

What we're going to talk about, tonight, is how we're going to sacrifice our money and give it away globally in India...in India. So, here's what the picture looks like. We have set aside in our budget close to \$1.5 million for The Radical Experiment. If you remember, the church, the elders, commissioned two different teams: one locally and one globally. Teams made up of elders and staff members and church members, to dive in and say, "How can we best use our money for urgent spiritual and physical need in Birmingham?" The team came back with a picture of what we can do in East Lake and Gate City, and so we allotted just under \$400,000 for that. Then, a team came back and said, "Here's what we can do in India." That's what we're going to talk about tonight. That leaves \$1,107,281 that we are focusing on urgent spiritual and physical need in India.

Now, obviously, you look at those two numbers, and you'll see there's a difference in percentage. There's a much heavier percentage when it comes to India than there is locally. That does not necessarily equate to, "Well, that means we care more about India than we care about Birmingham." The picture is we will, in the end, give far more resources, not just money, but time and energy into inner-city Birmingham, because this is where God has us. We live here, we have opportunity to be a part, day by day, of what He's doing here in inner-city Birmingham, and in a way that we will not, every single one of us, have as easy access to go to India.

There will be different opportunities to go to India. You'll hear about those next week, but not everybody is going to be able to go India like we can go downtown. Then, when you think about it, the massive need in India...I mean, dollars per person, we're spending a lot more on East Lake and Gate City than we are on the picture in India. What I want us to think about is the massive need there.

So, here's the picture. India: population 1.1 billion people. One country...1.1 billion people. Seemingly, 1.1 billion different kinds of people. Oftentimes, when we think of India, we think, "Well, it's one country, so it just kind of looks the same all across the board." It's not the case. India is multi-faceted...different languages, different castes, different religions, different culture, different traditions. India is massive, but it's not monolithic. It doesn't look the same everywhere. It's a complicated country. 1.1 billion people in a country with massive need.

41 percent of the world's poor. Is that not astounding? Almost half of the world's poor in one country. There are more people living below the poverty line in India than there are people in the entire population of the United States. There's rural poor...places that we went a couple of months ago, where people are trying to live on 50 cents a day; little to no access to clean water; sanitation that spreads disease rapidly.

We were, at one point, next to Dharavi slum there in Mumbai, and Dharavi slum, one of the largest slums in Asia. One million people in an area of about 400 acres. Just to give you a little glimpse into that. Brook Highland over here; it would be about one million people in a little over half on Brook Highland. A little over half of Brook Highland, not even the whole subdivision, crammed with a million people. 100,000 of them street children, 200,000 of them with HIV/AIDS...extremely poor sanitation.

The need is...it is staggering. It's overwhelming; it's deafening. Now, if that were the case in Brook Highland, then we would certainly not fill our Christianity with frivolous stuff and spend ourselves on more stuff for us. So, what we are saying as a faith family is we're going to open our eyes to the fact that that is real, and we're going to stop turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to this reality, and we are going to live our Christianity here for their sake there.

You are doing it; you're doing it, and I praise God for His grace alive in you as a faith family. For you to...this last Fall, as we're studying James, for you to say, "All right. What good is it? We say we believe the gospel. What we say to our brothers and sisters around the world, 'Go, we wish you well. Keep warm and well fed,' but do nothing about their physical needs." So, you set aside as a down payment on The Radical Experiment to come half a million dollars to say, "We want to be a part of meeting urgent spiritual and physical need." We've partnered together with these 21 churches in 21 communities through Compassion International where we are coming alongside contexts where children have a far smaller percentage of living than they do in most places in the world and saying, "We want to provide urgent physical needs, declaring and demonstrating the gospel through the local church."

This is where I want you just to take these massive numbers, massive need, and bring it down to personal faith, and I want to introduce you to one of these moms that is a part of one of these programs that we are partnered together with these churches in India to provide. I want you to hear her story, and I want you to see great evidence of God's grace in you. Watch this with me.

*[Video Plays]*

*Female:* My name is Lucky. I live in India and am one of the mothers of the child survivor program. Before I found the CSP, I was in great need of help. I was pregnant and there were a lot of things I needed that my family and my husband couldn't afford. I felt so hopeless knowing that I could not provide for myself or for my child.

When I arrived at the CSP, I received everything I would need as a pregnant mother, and I began learning how to take better care of myself and my family. At that time, I also learned about God. I had never known about Jesus before. But through the CSP, I heard the gospel and, little by little, I began trusting in God and even experiencing the miracles of God.

I remember going to the doctor with my sick child, who was suffering from jaundice. There was nothing the doctor could do for us. He said our only hope was to find a better hospital who could treat the disease. I didn't know what to do. So for the whole night I prayed. I prayed with tears that God would heal my son. I knew that my son's illness was out of my control. God taught me so much during this time, to trust Him and depend on Him for strength and to hope in Him, no matter what. And praise God, eventually my son began to get better.

Before I came to the CSP, I felt isolated from society, and I didn't know how to cope with the condition of my family. But now I love to venture out and make friends in my community. Some of the mothers in my community even come to me for consult.

Being able to take care of my family and watch my children grow is a true blessing from the Lord. God has been so gracious to bless our home. If there is anything I could ask of you, it would be to please pray for my family and for the mothers and children and families who live here in India. Pray for the salvation of these people, that Christ may be made known in India. I'm so thankful for the people who help support the CSP projects. I know I speak for all the mothers here when I say, "Thank you."

*[Video Ends]*

I love that. You think about that picture. The fact that here was a woman who had never heard the gospel, never heard of Christ, living in a context where many children are either sold through child trafficking, because families can't take care of them. In some of the communities we were in, children simply thrown out because families can't take care of them and provide for them. She finds out she's pregnant. She knows she's not able to care for this child, and she discovers that there's a church that wants to serve her, a church that you and I have had the opportunity to lock arms with. So, here now she is sharing with a child alive in her arms about how she has come to know the gospel, and she's asking us to pray for the salvation of Christ to be made known throughout India.

That's good. I praise God for the gospel in you. This is the picture. So, with that that we've already done, we've come to this point and said, "Okay, now how can we do even more in 2010 with this picture of The Radical Experiment." So, this team began to look over massive India, and much like the Lord kind of led us to focus in East Lake/Gate City, the Lord has led us to focus a little more pointedly on Northern India. So, I want you to hear about Northern India in particular, because Northern India, we discovered, is where most of these Child Survival Programs that we're partnering with together are located, and that's where most of our relationships and connections are. So, we began looking at Northern India. 600 million people spreading, really, from Delhi to Calcutta, just all of massive Northern India, all across the Ganges Plains.

There are two reasons we were particularly drawn, in addition to these relationships we already had...two reasons we were drawn to northern India. One, vast lostness. Less than...Northern India is less than 0.5 percent evangelical Christian, and that is a generous estimate. Less than 0.5 percent. Now, it's not that there's tons of Christians in Southern India, but there are more Christians there than Northern India. Just think of it: out of 600 million people, 99.5 percent of them are without Christ, and standing before God in judgment for their sin. That doesn't even represent the reality that out of that percentage...99.5 percent of them...many of them are unreached and unengaged with the gospel.

In other words, they've never even heard that there is a Savior who can deliver them from their sin. Northern India filled with unreached, unengaged people groups. Vast lostness. Just...it's rural lostness. You go into villages that have never, for generations, ever heard the name of Christ proclaimed. Rural, remote, never even heard the gospel. So, to go into those villages and to preach the gospel and to know this is the first time this has even been heard here...hasn't even gotten to them yet...and then to be in these mega cities like Delhi or Calcutta and to see people in this concentrated area, and just imagine it. You see faces everywhere, and you realize: out of all the massive faces you see, maybe there's one

believer here; one person who knows the peace and love of Christ, and most of the faces you see have never even heard the gospel. Like, it's overwhelming. Vast lostness.

As a side note: you saw in that video, and you see in other pictures, other videos, the dot on the forehead of many of the women. It's called a "bindi," usually a red dot, not always...usually a red dot. Really, when it comes down to it, it's basically cultural decoration. Like, there's a background there where it's had religious significance, where the forehead is the center of wisdom, and so it would be a prayer for wisdom from God or gods that you worship, or it would be there to ward off evil or bad karma that would be coming your way, but really, it's more of cultural decoration today. You'll see it on some of the children...you'll see either a black dot or just a black mark there on their forehead, and again, a lot of varied pictures. It's more just custom. There are superstitions that go back to that, there are religious backgrounds, but really when it comes down to it, it's just another picture of the vast culture of religious landscape that is India.

Northern India: vast lostness, and second factor, varied persecution. I want to be careful here. This is more isolated. This is not saying that all of India...all of Northern India is filled with life threatening persecution for believers, but there are pockets of extreme persecution in Northern India. You go up in to the northwest, far northwest part of India, near Pakistan, and you see persecution at the hands of militant Muslims, and this is where we were just a little over a year ago, and came back and shared with you about Samuel, one of the brothers there, who we had the opportunity to meet, who just a couple of months prior, his wife had been poisoned by her parents and killed by her parents because she followed after Christ. I mean, these are realities.

Extreme persecution in Northwestern India, when it comes to Islam, and then in places like Orissa state, where Muslims are experiencing persecution at the hand of Hindu nationalists. This has been even in the news some, but the picture there of Hindu nationalists burning homes, beating men and women and killing some. So, there are definitely pockets of India where there is extreme persecution. Some pockets where it's not as extreme, but it's still there.

So, as we pray, this is a place where urgent spiritual need and urgent physical need just collide together. So what can we do? What can we really do when it comes to that massive need? Well, here's what we're going to do. There are more details that we're going to dive into next week here, but I just want to give you an overall picture of where that 1.1 million is going.

First, engaging hundreds of villages with the gospel for the first time. We're working with some different folks, and most of the folks we're working with are indigenous Indian believers. We're coming alongside the local church there and helping them to engage hundreds of villages with the gospel for the first time. This year, there will be hundreds of villages that will hear the gospel for the first time as we partner together with these Indian brothers and sisters, these church planters...indigenous Indian church planters. So, that's one picture.

Second, to train thousands of indigenous church leaders. Church members, leaders, planters, to be involved in training. We've got a couple of different avenues where we are doing this through training up indigenous Indian church leaders. One of our relationships there sent us a note just this last week about Aneal, a 22 year old brother in India that's a part of this short-term training that one of our partners had set up. Aneal came to the short-term training, just got in deeper and deeper and deeper. Listen to this: over the last year, Aneal has started 17 new discipleship groups, three of which have become healthy

house churches. What have I done in the last year? Like, that's through this growing network, over 260 people have come to faith in Christ through Aneal's leadership in the church, many of whom have already been baptized. Aneal now has a group of leaders under him that are leading house churches, and God is using him to expand His kingdom greatly.

So, we want to be a part of encouraging and raising up hundreds, if not thousands, of Aneals. Then, in the process of going to these people groups, raising up church leaders; we want to provide tens of thousands...tens of thousands...with food, water and/or medical care through local churches. Again, the key is doing all this through local churches. We're going to give another year toward the CSP's, as we partner together with these 21 different churches, through Compassion, and then to...we went into some of these communities and villages where these Child Survival Programs are, and the church will have water that provides for the needs that are there for these mothers and their children, their families, but the reality is these villages just go on and on and many do not have access to clean water. So, we began identifying, "Okay, which villages need clean water and how can we get it to them." So, we're working together to get clean water in all those villages and then in other villages that we have relationships with, so that as a result of this year, there will be tens of thousands of people who will have food, water and/or medical care.

Then, finally, we're going to give millions access to the Bible in their own language. Millions of people, as a result of this picture this year, are going to have access to the Bible in their language. So, we're going to talk more about specifics and all of that next week, but I just want you to pause...I want you to see that picture and just pause and let's ask the question, "Is this worth it?" Like, is it worth it to let go of our comforts and our programs and totally change the way we do church in our culture, to be less self-entertaining and self-indulging and more for the glory of Christ amidst urgent spiritual and physical need. Is it worth it? I praise God that you have said "yes" to that. That you've said, "Yes, it is worth it. It's worth it to lay down our lives for the sake of the glory of Christ."

So, I want to kind of put a bookend on this. I want you to watch one more video with me, and I want you to hear a pastor...one of the pastors we met in one very impoverished place where we were. I want you to hear him talk about some of the needs and the gravity of the needs, but I also want you to hear him speaking with hope about the gospel and the power of the gospel to meet those needs and see how that comes together, the gospel and urgent need. Watch this with me, and we'll kind of put a bookend on this.

*[Video Plays]*

*Male:* My name is Sanjil. The church I pastor was started by my grandfather. Coincidentally, it came from a Brahman family, which meant it was a member of the highest caste, that of the priesthood. It is really ironic that he became a Christ-follower and started a church. Today, the same church has locked arms with the Child Survivor Program, joining together to fight poverty and spread the gospel.

Here in the tea garden world of India, most people live in tribal areas, working as temporary laborers for usually six months out of the year, earning around 57 rupees a day, which is little more than a dollar. Over the past decade, many tea gardens have closed down, and many people have been left with no salary, no medical care, nothing. This is one of the many challenges we face every day in our area. Families are being affected by diseases like malaria and are suffering with stomach problems due to improper drainage systems and unclean drinking water. Often, when a family member gets sick, they cannot afford any medicine.

When families can't support themselves, many times they will sell their children. As a result, children are being trafficked to Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Arab countries. It is also common for children to be taken without their parents' permission, and many of the girls are forced into prostitution.

Through Child Survival Programs, we know that when we impact the child, we impact the mother, and when we impact the mother, we're impacting the families, and when we impact the families, we impact our community. Ultimately, we want to reach these families with the gospel. We want to share our hope in Christ with the mothers and teach them Bible stories and show them how to pray.

Our church here is growing. Many people hear about God and His salvation, and they put their faith in Jesus. There are, however, many challenges for our people to publicly profess their faith in Christ. This can cause problems within a home, and often families will disown a family member who converts to Christianity. Please, be praying for the church here in India. Pray that it will grow, as Christians continue to demonstrate God's love in their families and communities.

Thank you for partnering with us. Thank you for your prayers. I know that together we can make a difference.

*[Video Ends]*

So here's the deal. If we're going to do this, like, if we really are going to live out the gospel in places of urgent spiritual and physical need, then it is not going to be easy. It's going to be costly; it's going to require...we talked about fear of faith two weeks ago...courage tonight. I mean, when you think about it, there are not many more places characterized by urgent spiritual and physical need in Birmingham than where we are focusing, and not many more places in the world characterized by urgent spiritual and physical need than where we are focusing. The needs are challenging, overwhelming...like, from a man-centered point of view, it would be better to take on something where we have a little greater chance of success, wouldn't it? Where the obstacles aren't quite as steep, and this is where I am so thankful to God that He has brought us on this night to Joshua 1.

## **Courage in Joshua**

With Joshua standing on the brink of the Promised Land, looking out in a land where there are no less than 31 different kings and all of their armies. They've been wandering in the desert, and he's supposed to lead this people to take down every single one of those kings and their armies. It's his first day on the job, and so God comes to him and listen to what He says. I want you to underline every time you hear God say to Joshua, "Be strong," or "Be courageous." Underline every time you see it.

Verse 1.

*After the death of Moses, the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all*



*the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea to the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Three times. You underline it three times. "*Be strong and courageous.*" Why did God say to Joshua three times, "*Be strong and courageous*"? Because Joshua was scared to death, and God had designed it that way, that he would look out across that land and think, "There's no way."

This is the picture that's before us. Our Christian lives, and we as a church, were, in a sense, designed to be put in situations where from the perspective of this world, we should be afraid. Like, if we as a church want to live out a nice, comfortable Christian spin on the American dream and indulge and please and entertain ourselves, we can do that without God. However, when we set our face toward deepest, darkest need right around us and among the nations, then we will need God.

### **He must trust divine promises.**

God speaks to Joshua at that moment, and He says, "*Be strong and courageous.*" Where does courage come from, when you're standing on the brink, facing 31 kings and all their armies? First, he must trust divine promises. God had promised Moses to give this land...in fact, if we had more time, we'd look at how verses 3, 4, and 5 are almost verbatim the same words God spoke to Moses in Deuteronomy 11:24-25. Same promises. Really, it goes back farther than that. God spoke to Abraham and said, "I will give you this land." To Jacob, to Isaac, He said, "I will give you this land." To Moses, "I'll give you this land," and now He's saying it to Joshua. God had given him the land.

First time we see, "*Be strong and courageous,*" in verse 6, He says, "*Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.*" "I've sworn to give it to them, I've promised to give it to them. Every place where your foot is set belongs to you", which means not only had God given them the land, but God had guaranteed him the land. There's no doubt, there's no question here. God spells out the specifics. "From this area to this area, it is yours." There is a sense in which Israel is going to take this land in the book of Joshua, but there is also a sense in which the land already belongs to them. It's guaranteed.

God had guaranteed it by His promises, which on a side note here, notice that here in Joshua 1, God does not give all the explanations for how this is going to happen in the description for how all these details are going to work in these different battles. Isn't that what we want sometimes? Don't we sometimes want, when we are going into something unknown, something difficult before us, we want to know how this is all going to work out? We want to know all the details. If God would just explain to us what's going to happen, it would make us a lot more confident going in the process. Know this: God does not always

give explanations, but He does always give promises, and faith is stepping out on the promises that He has given and knowing that He is going to be faithful to direct and guide all the circumstances, to show Himself faithful to those promises.

### **He must follow divine commands.**

So, his courage is going to come by trusting divine promises. Second, he must follow divine commands. Second time we see, "*Be strong and courageous*," is in verse 7, and He says, "*Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you*," referring to the law that we see that has unfolded in these first books of Old Testament history.

The picture is Joshua is to obey the commands of God. It's interesting, when you read Joshua this week, you will notice that Israel's success in the Promised Land is not ever based on their keen military strategy or brute military strength. Their success is always based on obedience to the Word of God. They win when they're obedient, and they lose when they're disobedient. When they're obedient, all it takes is some guys playing some tunes and shouting one day and the walls come down, but then, when they're disobedient, even their strongest men can't take the smallest city. Courage does not come from following the ways of this world. Courage only comes from following the Word of God. That's the picture we're going to see unfold in the book of Joshua.

So, God says to him, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth," in verse 8. "Meditate on it day and night." Old Testament concept of meditation real quick...two facets in meditation. First, you fix your mind on who God is and what God has said. So, God says, "Joshua, God's Word must be on your mind. Fix your mind on the Word of God." However, that's not all meditation is. The word "meditate" literally means...Hebrew, in the Old Testament here, it literally means "mutter."

I love this picture. It was something...meditation was something you would do aloud. You would speak aloud. You would mutter the words of God, and as you muttered them, as you spoke them aloud, they would be ingrained into your mind and your heart and your life. So, God's Word must be on his mind, and God's Word must be in his mouth.

This was a good reminder to me, even studying this this week, because I was reminded that Joshua's authority to lead the people of God was totally based on his obedience to the Word of God and his speaking the Word of God. The reality is, in my life as a pastor, elders in this church, authority is only based on pointing to the Word of God not on following the ways of men. To the extent with which I or anyone else in leadership in this church calls us to go somewhere that the Word does not specify, then we don't have authority. However, where the Word specifies, we have all authority to move forward. He must follow divine commands. Courage comes from following divine commands. You know you can have courage when you're following divine commands and trusting divine promises.

### **He must depend on divine presence.**

Third, he must depend on divine presence. Third time, God says, "*Be strong and courageous*," down in verse 9, He says, "*Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*." He said it earlier, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you; I will never forsake you." He says the same thing, just in two different ways. You're not going to be alone.

This was huge. From the perspective of the world, Joshua should be scared to death. He has every reason to be scared to death if he is on his own. In the same way that if you were moving into the inner-city and readjusting your entire life, you should be scared to death if

you were on your own. However, you are not on your own; we are not on our own; Joshua was not on his own. So, with the presence of God, instead of being scared to death, Joshua could be sure of victory. Think about it. He hadn't even fought one battle, and he was guaranteed to win the whole land. That's good news. It's a great setup when the God of the universe tells you, "Before you fought one of these kings, you win." That's good. The picture here is, when you have the presence of God...it's Romans 8. If God is for you, then nothing can stand against you. That's courage, depending on the divine presence.

### **He must live for divine glory.**

Ultimately, leading to...he must trust divine promises, follow divine commands, depend on divine presence, and he must live for divine glory. I want you to turn with me real quick to Joshua 24. It's the last chapter in the book, and I want to show you this. While you're turning there, think about this with me. Joshua's very name points away from himself to God. You remember the name change that happened earlier in our reading...Joshua's name? His name meant "saves" or "delivers," but his name was changed to Joshua, which means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh delivers." It's the first time in Scripture that we see a name explicitly given to someone that includes Yahweh in the name, and it's there for a reason. Joshua's entire life is intended to point to the reality that it is the Lord who saves and the Lord who delivers. So, when you read through this week, and you see Joshua leading the people day after day after day, know that it's not ultimately Joshua leading the people. It is the Lord who's leading the people. It is not Joshua who's giving the victory, it's the Lord who's giving the victory, which is the whole point.

When you get to the end here in Joshua 24, and they've gotten into the land and God speaks to His people, and I want you to circle every time you see God use the first person pronoun "I," to refer to Himself. I just want you to circle every time you see "I." There's one time where you see Him use the third person pronoun "He", and He's referring to Himself there.

However, look at this, Joshua 24:2. *"Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel..."* So, God speaks, and listen to what God says.

*"Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.*

*Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the Sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the LORD, he [He's referring to Himself] put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you.*

*Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand.*

*And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant."*

You get the point? God says, "I did all of this," and that is the point. God gave Joshua the land in a way that only God could get the glory. You think about it, that first major battle in Jericho...why would God design that battle plan for taking the first major city in the Promised Land? Out of all the ways they can make a statement, going in and all the military strategies available to them, God comes to Joshua in Joshua 6 and says, "Get your musicians, and you all play some songs for a few days." Like, Joshua, can you imagine him going to the army, full of men who've been waiting for the chance to battle and saying, "We're going to turn it over to the music guys for this one. You know, they've been working on a couple tunes, and so they're going to play for a few days. Then, well, here's the deal. One day we're going to shout really loud, and the walls are going to come down."

That's weird. Why would this be the battle plan? Don't miss it. God is doing what He does throughout history. He's organizing, orchestrating the events of His people, so that in the end, only He gets the glory for what happens. Because when they take that city, just like He had said in Joshua 6...let me tell you what you don't see. You don't see all the Israelites going up to the trumpet players, telling them what an incredible job they did that week. Like, "Ralph, I've never heard you play that well. Harry, you hit the high C. It was awesome. You guys are incredible." You see the people saying, "Only God could have done this." You get...you have courage when you are living for divine glory. Now, that's the picture here in Joshua.

## **Courage from Jesus**

The last thing I want to do is read into here something that is not there, but here's what I want us to do real quick. I want us to do the Google Earth type thing, and okay, we've looked here, now back up for a second and look at the overall picture of redemptive history. As I was studying and meditating on this text, muttering this text this week, I could not help but to think of another picture in Scripture that we talk a lot about around here, where we see the exact same realities.

So, I want you to turn with me real quick to Matthew 28, and I want you to think with me about the day when Jesus stood on a mountain with His disciples. He is about to leave them and send them out into the world. These guys, entrusted with the responsibility of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, talk about scared to death. Jesus looks at them, and He says, *"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

### **Let us claim the divine promise.**

Think about it. These words were not just spoken to these disciples on that day. These words are the same words that drive us today, as we look square in the face of inner-city

Birmingham and massive need in India. So, I want to say to us, based on this text, in light of what we have already seen in the Old Testament, brothers and sisters, let us claim the divine promise. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. That's a promise. God has given Jesus authority over all peoples.

Jesus at this point has delivered...which by the way, "Joshua" translated into the Greek is "Jesus." The picture here is Jesus saves, Jesus delivers. He has died on a cross in our place, for our sins, and brothers and sisters, He has conquered sin and conquered death and conquered the grave. He has risen from the dead, and He is about to ascend to the Father, exalted on high, at the Father's right hand, and He says, "All authority among all peoples belongs to me." God has given Him reign and rule and dominion over all peoples...all peoples. Every knee will one day bow and every tongue will one day confess that He is Lord. What that means...therefore, what that means is God has guaranteed us success among all peoples.

Think about it. We know this. Revelation 5, He has authority. He has purchased men and women from every tribe and tongue and language and nation. Revelation 7, there is coming a day when every single people group is going to be represented around throne, singing His praises, for His salvation. Which means you and I can go into any unreached people group in India and come alongside our brothers and sisters, going into hundreds of unreached villages, and we can know as we go into different people groups that there are people who are going to believe, and there are people from every single one of these people groups that is going to be represented around that throne.

That's confidence. That's great confidence. That's success. Oh, that's success. Joshua 1 is so twisted and archaic, and His promises of success and prosperity used to justify a prosperity gospel, which is no gospel at all. Success is not defined by how much house or car, stuff or promotion or advancement you have. Success is defined by giving your life to make the gospel known among all peoples, and in doing so, discovering the very purpose of God. God has given Him authority, guaranteed us success.

### **Let us obey the divine command.**

So, let us claim the divine promise, then let us obey the divine command. "*Go and make disciples...*" Brothers and sisters, let's go into inner-city Birmingham and go into India, and let's let the gospel be on our lips. Let's mutter the gospel every step of the way. May it be constantly on our lips, and may the gospel be in our lives. May it be evident, brothers and sisters, that we believe the gospel in our day, and that we spoke it and that we showed it, that we proclaimed it and we demonstrated it. Let us obey the divine command and know that our success is not based on how innovative we are or how strong or stout we are, that our success is based on how obedient we are.

### **Let us experience the divine presence.**

Let us obey the divine command. Let us, in the process, experience the divine presence. Same promise, "I will be with you." Same promise. God speaks to Abraham and says, "I will be with you." He speaks to Isaac and says, "I will be with you," and to Jacob, He says, "I will be with you," and to Moses, He said, "I will be with you," and to Joshua, He said, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you." The very reality is it's the same God who spoke to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Moses and Joshua is the same God who is in this room, in our midst, saying to us as a church, "I am with you."

That's awesome. "I will not leave you. You step out into tough places, you will never be forsaken by me. You will experience my presence every step of the way." As a result, from the perspective of the world, we should play it safe. Maybe we should step back a little bit

and tone this thing down and insulate and isolate ourselves from tough places, because there's risk involved in that, and if we were alone, then that is exactly what we should do, but as long as we are trusting the promises of God and obeying the commands of God, then we are assured of the presence of God. So, with the presence of God, we don't need to play it safe; with the presence of God, we can risk it all.

Now, I want to be careful. I don't want to make people too nervous here. Maybe a little nervous, but not too nervous. I'm not talking about taking risks for risk's sake. I'm not talking about taking unnecessary risks, risks that leave wisdom behind, but I am talking about risks that leave the worldly wisdom that surrounds us behind. Risk that says, "If the promises of God are there, and the commands of God are telling us to do this, and the presence of God is with us, then we can risk it all, and no matter what happens, we have the victory." There is incredible courage and confidence if the people of God were stepping out in the Word of God, because God, in the same way that He delighted in showing Himself strong and showing His character true to Joshua and Moses and Abraham, desires to do the same thing with us.

### **Let us spread the divine glory.**

So, let us spread the divine glory. Let's be honest. The guys standing on this mountain were not the sharpest tools in the shed. If you're putting together an "A" team, they're not the highest ranked seed, if you know what I mean. That's the beauty. It wasn't dependent on these guys. They were not standing on the mountain in spite of their weakness. The reason they were standing on the mountain is because of their weakness.

Let's be honest in this room. We're not, like, the sharpest people in the world. We're not the smartest people in the world. We're not the most intellectual; we're not the most gifted; we're not the wealthiest people in the world. You know the wealthiest person in the world...if not the wealthiest person, one of the wealthiest people in the world...is the King of Brunei. We don't have all the stuff this world has. You don't have the most experienced pastor. You don't have the most a lot of things pastor, for that matter. We're not the most influential people down here in Alabama. I love Alabama, but we're not the influential center of the world.

Which is why I love Acts 4:13. *"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and recognized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they took note these men had been with Jesus."* So God, may those around this church see courage in common, otherwise insignificant people and take note that those people know a great God and have a presence working on their behalf that is far greater than they are. So, let's go into inner-city Birmingham and massive need in India and everywhere in between, and let's do it with this prayer in our hearts: God, give us the nations and do it in such a way that only you get the glory.

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