

Prayers

Opening prayer

All praise be to You Living Lord, for in my darkest depths You lift my soul, and from my deepest despair You raise me up. Remind me daily of Your power to save, Lord God, so that I never forget the wonder of Your grace and the provision You have made for my life. I thank You, Lord Jesus; I thank you from the very depths of my heart, and I praise You: AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

General theme for the week: action

1. For yourself

Ask the Lord to help you do the things that are before you to do. Everyone has a list of things to do, how long is yours? Submit it to the Lord

2. For your friends and family

Some of the things you need to do relate to your home and to your friends and family, so pray about this and ask the Lord to help you get a perspective on what you need to do

3. For the church and its work

Pray that God's people will accept their responsibility to be workers in the Lord's harvest, so ask the Lord to help your church fellowship fulfil its evangelistic mission

4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)

Pray for some of the things you hear about in the news, and where possible, use the internet to respond to them, by either joining a forum to discuss a subject, sending an email to a parliamentary representative, or other such action

Meditation

The freshness of each new day reveals the blessings of the Lord
And the gifts He gives to those who receive them and use them:

The offer of precious moments spent in reading the Word;
The challenge of sustaining the work He has given us to do;
The chance to be creative in the path of discipleship and faith;
The excitement of knowing the Lord has more for us each day;
The valuable moments of quiet peace which refresh the soul;
The freedom of praying, to bless other people and the world;
The honour of living the life of Christ, and helping the poor;
The opportunity to love again, where yesterday we failed;

How can we show gratitude for the privileges we have been given?

Except in loving the Lord our God and doing what He has called us to do.

Bible Study

Bible passage – Joshua 1: 1-9

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said this to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant;

² 'My servant Moses is dead. Now, you and all this people, get ready to cross over the Jordan into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³ Everywhere that you

will place your feet I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and the Lebanon here as far as the great river (the Euphrates), and all the land of the Hittites as far as the Great Sea in the West. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you, I will not leave you or forsake you.

⁶ 'Be strong and courageous; for you will put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, and be careful to do everything according to the law my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this book of the law leave your speech; you will meditate on it day and night, so that you are careful to do everything written in it. Then you will become prosperous, and you will be successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you?

'Now be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'

Review

At the end of the great book of Deuteronomy, God's servant Moses is taken away to Mount Nebo (Deut 34:1f.) by the Lord, where he dies. Moses had been Israel's enigmatic and powerful leader for a long time, leading God's people through the extraordinary experience of the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 12-14) and then through the formative years of the nation's history whilst travelling in the desert (as recorded in Exodus 16f., Numbers and Deuteronomy). Moses is a man of unique significance to the story of God's people in the Old Testament, but it becomes clear in Scripture that throughout his life, the Lord had been grooming a man who would take over from him, and his name is Joshua, the son of Nun (Josh 1:1f.).

Joshua, the man ready to lead Joshua figures significantly in the stories of Israel's wandering through the wilderness, leading the people of Israel against the Amalek (Exodus 17:9f.), accompanying Moses on his spiritual pilgrimages up various mountains (see 24:13 etc.), and being one of the 'spies' who entered the Promised Land in advance of the invasion. At the time, Israel rebelled against the idea of taking the land because of the reported presence of very large people ('Nephilim' – see Numbers 13:33), but this was not Joshua's fault. He was one of two spies who reported favourably about the Promised Land (Numbers 14:1f.), and God blessed Joshua by enabling him to survive the forty years in the wilderness. Joshua was therefore a man marked by the favour of God (Deut 3:28, 31:3f. etc.), and when Moses died and Israel stood poised to enter the Promised Land, Joshua was ready and willing to step into Moses' shoes.

Blessing for service Joshua may have been ready and willing, but he still needed God's specific blessing and anointing for service. Just as Moses met with the Lord at the burning bush (Exodus 3) and was commissioned to act, so Joshua was spoken to by the Lord God here at this critical moment of time in Israel's history. It is not easy for us to understand, but there was a danger that with Moses gone there would be a disastrous power vacuum that might be filled with a less godly man. Later on in the story of Israel, things did not always go smoothly when one king died and another took his place (see 1 Kings 1 and 2 for example). At this time however, God had laid the foundations of a quick succession, and moved quickly to appoint Joshua. He did this by a prophetic word which connected Joshua seamlessly with the rule of Moses (Josh 1:1,2), and pointing Israel to what He wanted of them next. Under Joshua's leadership they were to cross the Jordan and take the Promised Land!

Taking the Promised Land This was Joshua's sole task, and the taking of the land was the one covenant promise of God to the forefathers that had not yet been fulfilled (see Gen 1:2,3 and 13:14f.). The commission Joshua received has inspired people for centuries, because the Lord promised Joshua total success in return for total submission; in anointing Joshua, God said,

'no one will be able to stand before you all the days of your life ... I will be with you ... only be strong and courageous' (1:5,6).

The Lord showed Joshua the extent of the Promised Land (see verse 4), though the description of it here is not as straightforward as we might think (we will study this in more detail as the story of Joshua unfolds). The promise of success in taking the land was indeed absolute, though we will discover later whether Joshua was truly successful. After God's promise and instruction to take the land, most of our passage today is a speech of encouragement by God to Joshua to be '*strong and courageous*' (1:6,9)

Being strong and courageous! These words are naturally famous, and often quoted. It is worth noting however, that they are said twice at the beginning and the end of God's speech (1:6 and 9), in which He urges Joshua to undertake the disciplines necessary for success. Whilst courage and boldness would be important, the Lord told Joshua in clear terms to

'do everything according to the law my servant Moses commanded you' (1:7).

In other words, the Lord required Joshua to be totally obedient to His revealed and written will, and not turn from it

'to the right hand or to the left' (1:7).

So in order for Joshua to fulfil this role and be obedient, the Lord told him he had to be someone who was utterly grounded in God's law, which was the only written scripture of the day (1:8). God's written will had to be a natural part of his speech and his thoughts at all times, and he had to be . Using the language of today, God told In the same way that the Bible comes alive to those who are know God's Word through and through.

If we are to take Joshua's commission seriously, then we too should know that if we seek the blessing of success, then we must be people who are utterly committed to God's revealed will. Certainly, if we want to follow in the footsteps of those who have done great things for God, then our starting place must be to love our Lord so much that we know His Word and are obedient to it. Faith and obedience are the essential prerequisites for success in God's Kingdom here on earth.

Discipleship

Questions for groups

1. What can we learn from this passage today about obedience? What obedience does our Lord God require of His people today?
2. The church is sometimes coy in talking about 'success'. Do we need to feel embarrassed by success, and how can we aim for it?
3. How does this passage of scripture assist the faith of ordinary Christians?

Discipleship challenges

- *How do you go about being a man or woman of God's Word? We hear the Lord speak to us in many different ways today, and scripture itself tells us to listen to the preached Word, to read the written Word, to live with Jesus the Word and to study the revealed Word. How do you know what God's Word for you is? Look for a specific and prayerful answer to your question!*
- *Pray for all who need true leadership today. Many of God's people languish for want of a good and godly leader, so pray for those who train leaders and those who are called to leadership.*

Final Prayer

Thank You, heavenly Father, for the call that You have placed upon our lives. You have loved us, given us Your love, and revealed Your truth to us; help us therefore to give you the best of our time and energy so that we may be used in Your service. All praise to You, heavenly Father. AMEN
