

## **HOW SHALL WE STUDY OUR OLD TESTAMENTS? - Part Four**

**Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026 - 5:30 p.m.**

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We're continuing with the way God builds the kind of character that will accomplish His will and open our lives up to all He has planned for us in the future. We've considered four factors. First, ***remembering power comes from the Lord.*** Second, ***learning to live all of life in the presence of God.*** Third, ***remembering nothing is worse than forgetting to honor God.*** Fourth, ***remembering you can't build your own ego and the kingdom of God at the same time - never.*** And fifth, ***meekness must be combined with resolute convictions about the great provision of God.***

Now we consider a ***sixth*** lesson for Joshua:

- 6) **ALL OF LIFE MUST BE COURAGEOUSLY (THAT'S THE IMPORTANT WORD) ANCHORED IN THE WORD OF GOD**

**Joshua 1:6-8 - “Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] 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. [8] 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.”**

I see several things here I try to apply to my own life:

- a) ***Whenever we respond to the call of God in any area of life it will require strength and courage for its fulfillment.***

**Verses 6 - 7 - “Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] 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.”**

The emphasis here isn't on *intelligently* studying the Word (though that's obviously important) but *courageously* studying the Word. Two times in two verses God repeats the identical words to Joshua - "**Be strong and courageous,**" the second time adding the imperative that he must be "very **courageous**"(7). Making a **decision** to follow God is one thing. That decision usually only takes a brief moment in time. **Staying on track** until that decision for God is fully carried out is something else.

This idea of "**strength and courage**" is repeated to carve it deeply into Joshua's mind. It's God's way of reminding Joshua that his decision to follow the call of leading the people **is not going to go unchallenged**. There will be **obstacles - upsets - mid-course disasters** - all sorts of things calculated to make him **waver**.

I want to talk about the **process** of heeding the call of God. **Enthusiasm** is a great spark plug for spiritual quests. It makes our future plans look light and full of joy. Enthusiasm isn't a heavy load to carry. It makes God's call feel **spring-loaded** at times. But enthusiasm, if powerful and igniting for faith, is also fickle and fading. It is not the same thing as **faith**. Faith is more rugged and permanent than enthusiasm.

Faith can feed itself through trial and opposition as long as it roots itself firmly in the Word of God. And the **reason** faith can endure even after **enthusiasm** fails is faith keeps itself anchored in **God** rather than human **emotion**. Faith can last as long as God doesn't change or fail. And it is the **function** of the Word to **convince** my heart that God never changes or fails. That's why faith comes from hearing the Word.

However, there is an **enemy** of faith. That enemy is **unbelief**. But we need to know more than this. We need to know how unbelief **works**. And here's one of the most important things to know about unbelief - **Unbelief rarely does its darkest work right away**. Almost no endeavour for God will be **immediately** challenged by unbelief.

The power of **enthusiasm** is such that it kicks us out of the starting gate with momentum. Usually there is almost nothing Satan can do to thwart this initial rush of passion for the cause of Christ. And that doesn't **bother** Satan because he knows he doesn't **have** to come crashing down on our passion all the sudden. His best work is to gradually **let the air out of our tires**.

My experience is it is the **nature** of unbelief that it **settles in after a period of service of ministry**. And something else. Unbelief is rarely an **intellectual** thing. It's usually not the case that someone is **argued** out of his or her fresh commitment to follow or serve Christ in some deeper way.

A postmortem on spiritual unbelief will usually reveal a time of trial or persecution or pressure to compromise. Faith is usually **worn down** rather than **frontally assaulted**. In other words, one of the chief works of the devil is to take the **courage** out of our walk with Jesus.

There are few things more important to hold in your memory than this. In any enterprise you undertake for the Lord - any task at all - spiritual courage is the need over the long haul. Be it **the reordering of your home - the rebuilding of your devotional life - the re-establishing of some area of ministry - your undertaking of some fresh responsibility in your ministry** - whatever it might be - the books and seminars can only give you **information**. And that's fine as far as it goes. But your deepest need isn't just **information**. It's **courage** to keep **applying** the information **to** your present situation when **unbelief** begins to press in and drag down.

I can't say this to myself strongly enough. The church is missing this so badly in so many areas. It is great to hear God speak and then to respond quickly by taking up some fresh challenge. It is good to repent of failure and turn about to a new direction in God's grace. It is good to hear the call to grow in Christ. But ***all of that is going to be challenged by the enemy at some point in time. Know*** that this is coming. There is no ***"if"*** about this. It is only a question of ***"when."***

And if all you have to throw at him is your ***technique*** for success you are doomed. Don't just fire off your latest book, tape, or cd. All of these may help, but what you need to do is throw the courage of your faith in his face. ***"....And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith"*** (1 John 5:4b).

- b) ***The devil gains a greater victory in fouling up my life for the lord midway through my commitment than he does if he just keeps me from ever starting out in the first place.***

I am becoming convinced the Devil has no interest in keeping me from ***starting*** things for God. ***Starting points*** don't hurt Satan's cause one bit and may even be turned to his advantage.

By that I mean if Satan keeps me from **starting** something for God he only defeats **me**. But if he can allow some measure of initial **success**, some **visibility** in my work for God before others, and **then** take away my courage and faith and capacity to **finish** - if he can cause me to quit **halfway** - then he not only ruins **my** effectiveness but also discourages those who may have taken courage at what Gods' grace was doing **through** me. If I don't **start**, it brings shame on me. If I start and don't **continue**, it brings shame on the whole cause of Christ. This is Satan's greater victory.

This is very important. It means Satan usually has a **long term** strategy rather than a **short term** one. And because he has such a **long-term plan** for taking the impact out of our lives, and because many Christians have been conditioned to motivate their lives **short term enthusiasm** rather than **long term courage**, God gives us this example from Joshua:

**“Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] 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”(Joshua 1:6-7).**

- c) ***There is a particular kind of courage Joshua must possess.***

**Joshua 1:7 - “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.”**

I can understand the exhortation to be ***careful to do according to all the law that Moses commanded***. That just makes sense. Joshua mustn't skip over anything lightly. He must be ***careful***. But the ***courage*** part of the command - what is that all about? Why does Joshua need to be ***courageous*** just to do God's Word?

Surely if Joshua needed courage he needed it to ***face his enemies***. God had already told Joshua that the promised land was controlled by ***"seven nations mightier than yourself"***(Deuteronomy 7:1). ***That's*** where Joshua needed courage. But there's no mention of any of those enemies in our text. When Joshua is commanded to be ***"very courageous"*** these enemies aren't even on God's mind. So if ***they're*** not the reason Joshua needs courage, what is?

When God talks about Joshua's need for courage all He talks about is the Word. "**Joshua, have the courage to keep rooted and obedient to the revelation I've given to Moses. Stay in this word constantly**"(7). The **enemies** are not the reason Joshua will need courage. The **tendency toward compromise** is the reason Joshua will need courage.

This is what **always** takes the most courage. **God can easily take care of Joshua's enemies**. That's why they're not even mentioned in our text. They're not mentioned because they're not a factor in Joshua's success. But only **Joshua** can establish the direction of his own heart. Only Joshua can **continue** in the Word when the battle with unbelief settles in during some long, dark stretch in the middle of the race. That's why God tells Joshua to have the courage to **stay rooted in the Word**. Hundreds will tell him to quit. He must have the courage to stay the course.

This is always what takes the most courage. The initial impulse to take some fresh step to please God - to set something right - brings a buzz of challenge and excitement. But it will take the power of courage to keep that drive going.

I have to remember to preach this truth all the time. The list of situations is endless. ***A marriage partner has been unfaithful.*** And there's nothing about that situation that's fair. He or she gets to run around at your expense and you have to hold a Christian standard and live life as a responsible married person waiting for your prodigal partner to come home. He or she commits the sin and you feel the loneliness and pain.

Or ***someone is separated from his or her spouse.*** Everyone else in today's world, including the departing spouse, treats ***separation*** as though it were ***divorce***. But the committed one ***can't*** if he wants to please Jesus. It takes incredible courage to live out ***your*** vows when your partner isn't living out ***his***. Or ***some horrible disease saps strength and joy from your life.*** Everybody else sings of their deliverance and miracle while you pray as best you can and suffer. Or someone else has a ministry being radically blessed by God and great recognition while you're serving God just as passionately, but seeing far less fruit or acclaim.

Listen, in any of those situations, the real enemy isn't the marriage or the sickness or the broken relationship or the uphill ministry assignment. The real enemy is that voice that crawls up on your insides and says "This isn't fair. This isn't right. God is expecting too much of me. His Word isn't working. His promise isn't true. There is no room or hope for joy or freedom down this road." And then this.... ***"Perhaps if I can just adjust slightly to the right or to the left..."***

Don't do it. Remember, it takes almost no courage at all to ***start*** to walk in God's way. But it takes incredible courage to ***continue*** in it. When you run out of ***"fantastic,"*** just ***persevere.***

- d) ***Finally, this text tells us where to invest our energies if we desire to have that kind of strength***

**Joshua 1:8 - "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."**

This verse is so important because it makes clear that when God calls for **courage** He's not just talking about **human resolve**. He's not calling for the power of positive thinking or mind over matter. Like in the physical body, strength comes from good nourishment. Strength can't just be **summoned**. It can't be **mustered up** - at least not for long. God links Joshua to a **source**. And the source of inward strength and courage is the **Word of God**.

Then God points out a particular **methodology**. There's a **way** in which the Word must be followed. And the key point is Joshua's integration of the Word can't be **partial** and it can't be **occasional**. Those are the two points embedded in our text. Joshua must pay close attention to **all** the word (7) and he must do this **all** the time (8).

Those are the rules. **First, pay attention to all the details** - "...be careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you"(7). And **second, do this all the time** - "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night...."(8).

The reason for these two rules is significant. Truth is always ***unlearned*** quicker than it's ***learned***. ***Decay*** comes more quickly than ***growth***. With fatigue and strain the spiritual memory becomes rusty and weak. We're slower to apply the spiritual truth we would quickly apply if we were at our physical best. Our attention becomes diverted to the ways of the world around us ***gradually***.

We don't ***deny*** the Word. We merely turn slightly "***to the right or the left***." That's God's way of saying we make ***small adjustments*** that don't even look all that significant. And after all, everyone else does. That's where the need for great ***courage*** suddenly kicks in.

Follow these two rules all your life. Our text says they will lead into "***good success***." How do you measure "***good success?***" God measures success by the ability to adhere to His Word when everything else pulls you in the opposite direction. Success is measured by the degree to which your life can't be budged from all that God has revealed ***in*** His Word - **Psalm 1:2-3** - "***....but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.***"

Read those words carefully. They are regularly abused in media driven religion. The promise ***isn't*** that everything he does ends in ***prosperity***. The promise is that in everything he does ***he*** prospers. His ***person*** thrives. Circumstances can be good or bad, happy or sad, pleasant or devastatingly painful. But no matter what comes, if he abides in the Word and never departs, if he suspends his own judgment about what's fair or unfair and just ***abides*** in the Word, ***he himself*** will prosper. It's guaranteed.