

LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text - Part six - Sunday, March 10th, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

JOSHUA - "Divine Power for the Battles of Life" (various texts)

- 1) **THE SOURCE OF JOSHUA'S STRENGTH - Exodus 17:8 -16 -**
"Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. [9] So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." [10] So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. [11] Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. [12] But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. [13] And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. [14] Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly block out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." [15] And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord is my banner, [16] saying, "A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Nobody in all of Scripture fought more battles than Joshua. Also, nobody in Scripture had a better success record. ***What made Joshua so effective?*** One of the answers is found in this text.

Take note that there is obviously something happening in this account that is of great importance to Joshua - **Exodus 17:14** - **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this as a memorial in a book and *recite it in the ears of Joshua*, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.’”** It’s not just left to chance that Joshua learns the lesson from this account.

The first thing Joshua learns is that even in the face of military conflict power does not come from general or sword. It comes from the presence of the Lord. And most of us **expect** that kind of lesson from a Bible study. But we mustn’t go too quickly here. This has deep relevance for all of us because most of us **aren’t** full time missionaries or Bible scholars. We need power in our **secular** assignments, and that’s exactly where the lesson Joshua learned presses home.

The Lord slowly teaches Joshua that the power and strength he so desperately needs will be found in sources that don’t **appear immediately relevant to his task**. Joshua is a new leader. He must learn to link **prayer** (which seems a **religious** activity) with **battle** (which seems like a **military** activity). Joshua quickly learns the nations' strength is linked to the lifted arms of prayer of Moses. Armies will have no lasting power apart from the life of prayer.

All of us know this, but ***none of us knows it well enough***. The human tendency is to rely on the things we can do fairly well. ***Our strengths become our greatest downfall***. We so easily become self-reliant. That, by the way, is the reason for the ***uplifted hands*** of Moses. Why isn't it enough just for Moses to ***pray*** for Joshua on the battle field? Why high up on that visible mountain peak? And why with visibly uplifted hands?

Because Joshua couldn't ***see*** Moses praying in his tent. And Joshua couldn't make the connection between Moses' prayers and Joshua's success without seeing Moses' hands going up and down and Joshua advancing or retreating if Moses just prayed silently to himself.

Why does God put Joshua through all of this? Because Joshua is a general. He already knows how to fight battles. ***But knowing how to do it isn't enough***. Joshua must learn to relate all of life to God through prayer. He must ***unlearn*** self-reliance. This is the greatest lesson a Christian can learn. ***We live in a visible world, yet power comes from the invisible***. We learned last week that this is where Moses' strength came from - ***"He endured as seeing Him who is invisible"***. Joshua must learn the same lesson.

- 2) **THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY - Numbers 11:24-29** - "So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. [25] Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. [26] Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. [27] And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." [28] And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them." [29] But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"

In this passage the Spirit of the Lord comes upon 70 elders in the tabernacle and they prophesy. Joshua becomes concerned because two more elders are found prophesying, but outside the tabernacle (which was not what Moses had initially commanded). ***He feels that Moses is being slighted by this action and steps to his defence - "My lord, Moses, stop them"***(28).

Verse 29 contains Moses' tremendous response, "**Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets...!**". Moses is so quick to point out that his own glory and reputation are not the issue of importance here. Write it down, Joshua. If you're concerned about your **own** glory and your **own** image you can't be zealous for **God's** glory. Moses is not out to grab the spotlight for himself. ***This is the only acceptable attitude for a man or woman of God.*** To lead well without holding on to your leadership too tightly is what the Spirit of Jesus is all about. The person is always dispensable. The ministry is the Lord's.

It was not an accident that God worked so mightily through Moses. The Bible describes him as the ***"meekest man in all the earth"***(Numbers 12:3). Joshua must copy that pattern. He must be faithful to God and make sure the glory goes where it belongs.

- 3) **SEEING PROBLEMS THROUGH THE EYE OF FAITH - Numbers 13:27-33 and 14:1-10** - "Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. [2] And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! [3] Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" [4] And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." [5] Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel."

[6] “And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes [7] and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. [8] If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. [9] Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” [10] Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.”

Out of the twelve who were sent in to spy out the land, only two believed God was able to do as He promised. The crowd was so angry with Joshua and Caleb they wanted them stoned (**Numbers 14:10**). *Even under that kind of pressure Joshua and Caleb refused to drift from their commitment to the faithfulness of God.* Sometimes you have to go against the flow of the crowd. Sometimes your convictions won't win popularity contests.

So these two lessons have to be held together. True, you can't be hungry for your own glory or reputation. But you **must** be firm to defend **God's** glory and rule. This is especially true when honoring God isn't popular or trendy or easy.

God is always looking for people who care more about honoring Him than being well thought of by the crowd. **Meekness**, yes. **Weakness**, no. God seeks people who refuse compromise or drift. We can see this trait clearly in ***John the Baptist - Luke 7:24*** - **“When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”** Jesus called him the greatest man born among women. Jesus was so pleased that John was not just a ***“reed shaken by the wind”***. He didn't just bend in the easy direction of the day.

The end of this story of Joshua and Caleb is fascinating. It took many years to come full circle, but ***forty years later Joshua would see that only he and Caleb would enter the promised land.*** All the grumblers and doubters died in the wilderness. No one remembers their names today. Grumblers and whiners are always quickly forgotten by history. Travel the globe. There not a monument constructed to a grumbler. How important it is that we learn to look at our problems through the lens of our God rather than look at God through the lens of our difficulties.

Years later the Psalmist (another man after God's own heart) would write, **“Blessed is the man who doesn't fear the day of evil tidings. His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.”**