

Joshua 1:6-9: Be Strong and of Good Courage- TORC 06/01/08

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,

After 40 years it was time to go home to a place that they had never been before. Moses took a look from the mountain top but the leader of the exodus and wilderness journeys was called home after a time of service. Moses had publically commissioned Joshua; the former Hoshea remained by God to lead the chosen into the Promised Land. Joshua was a warrior, a leader and faithful man of God. Joshua with Caleb understood that wonder and the power of God and told the people that the Promise Land was theirs for the taking. Then fear overcame the people and whole generation died their in the wilderness. But it was a new day and a new generation. Moses had the law read and once more the 10 commandments (十诫) . He gave them warning, encouragement and the call to walk with God. They were to follow their new leader as well. It is one thing to be the helper. It is one ting to be second in command, but now Joshua was on his own. There was no Moses to consult and where Moses was a shepherd Joshua was a man of war. Where Moses was a leader and guider Joshua was to lead the nation into battle and conquest. It was a new day and a new time and this now growing older man, he must have some 60 years old was to take control of the people of God. How can a man do such? It takes perspective, love, care and firmness. It is a matter of faith. So God by His Word came to Joshua to encourage Him and comfort in the context of covenant (约, 盟约) and promises to be fulfilled and promise made to Joshua that he could be of good cheer. I bring to you God's Word under the theme:

The Lord Commissions and Encourages Joshua: Be Strong and of Good Courage Confidence 2. Obedience 3. Comfort

Confidence The promise made some 4 centuries earlier to Abraham was now going to completed. The Lord was giving the land of Canaan to the children of Abraham. Joshua was the man chosen by God to lead the conquest. Joshua then was working with God on a mission that was going to end in success and victory. We know that God is a God of His word and though Israel might have been cut down for their sin at Sinai- the golden calf and the debauchery at Moab. Though Israel might have been forsaken after they lost faith in God there at the border of Canaan God was patient. In spite of their sins and lack of faith God would be faithful and gracious.

So Yahweh informs Joshua of the mission and that in fact it was God who was going to accomplish these many things. It was God who would give Israel strength. It was God who would fight for the people if they remained faithful and that meant too that their leader would remain faithful. Joshua was to be faithful to a faithful God. Joshua was to be strong and of good courage because of who God is. God now directly reveals himself to Joshua. We consider that for Joshua it must have been a time of some soul searching. It must have been a time of some anxiety and of course excitement. Now God comes in and makes the rough places plain so to speak. Whatever care or worry Joshua might have God was going to be with him every step of the way! Joshua could be strong in the Lord. Joshua might have thought what David would later write- I will fear no evil for you are with me! Or the Words from Psalm 124: 8
Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

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So our leaders today in the church must go in the conviction (信念) of the power of God. There has to be a sense in our consistory (长老会议) and deaconate (执事会) that God is with them and they must look to Him and Him alone to carry out the duty that they have been called to do. To root out (除掉) evil, to stand fast for good and to love the people of God take a courage and strength that only can give. We know that that Christ is our new Joshua and we know we must follow Him. He has won for us the favour of God and is busy redeeming (救赎) not only the church but the creation. Not just Canaan now but the whole earth is the domain of Jesus Christ Lord and Lord and king of Kings. By His death and resurrection through faith He redeems hearts and is successful in the conquest of the nations as His Kingdom knows no bounds (界限). The church needs leaders who are convinced of the power of God and the leadership of His son and then follow as they lead. They cannot walk through valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil unless they know and fear the Lord. To be strong and of good courage too is to know what the battle is about and to know the outcome. It is to trust that we will overcome all obstacles (障碍) for God is for us who can be against us. Israel knew that as Psalm 124 tells us that if God was not on their side they would no longer exist and they would have survived no peril (危险) or hardship. Yet they were there at the end of the day by the power of God. So too we exist by the power of God in Christ. He has defeated sin death and hell and the earth is his and therefore our domain. By His Spirit He will be us! Our leaders must go in the knowledge that we are the champions and to those who lead well there is honour and surety.

Fear is a terrible thing. It is a debilitating (使人非常虚弱的) thing. It is a paralyzing (使人瘫痪的) thing. You can lead not to fail. One can lead from insecurity and thus seek the accolades (表扬) of others. You can lead from the position of neediness or from the position that to meet the needs of the congregation you must show that you trust God!

Joshua was not to get down over every little thing. He was not fear though all looked bleak (没有指望的). Had not he seen with his own eyes what God did to Egypt? Did Joshua not see how he could even the hold the sun by the power of God? Concern of course, but never sinful worry for Joshua was to depend of the lord and the Lord made clear the success of the future. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

So men, be strong and of good courage: maintain your walk in the covenant.

Obedience As we move now from Joshua to the kings, one thing was always clear. A man to be strong and of good courage, must be obedient. He needs to take heed to himself to ensure that he walks with God. What is true for all men must be true of the leadership. That a no less true then for Joshua. We regard the words of Psalm 1:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel(计谋) of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers (褻慢人). But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

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There is relationship. Leadership demands the sacrifice of self and the murmurs (抱怨) of self will. It demands total submission (顺服) to the will of God. It demands knowledge of the will. The single biggest problem today in the churches is leadership that either does not care about the Word of God or is ignorant of it. It is truly a sad commentary (评论) that in our day and age of free time and opportunities for study, with a myriad of resources at hand that many men called to leadership really do not have a grasp on the Word of God. When someone who seems like they do, the leadership can easily be led astray through blind trust. Joshua was to read the law of God and was never let it depart from his mouth. He was to lead by speaking God's words after him.

No man by the way can achieve perfection in this. But the Word read often will guide and lead a man. By that Word understanding for the situation is given. We cannot remember things we have not experienced and we cannot draw on resources we do not make use of. So too Joshua needs to have a mind shaped by the wisdom of God.

Christ our leader has shown us the same thing. He came to do the work of God and He was unequivocal (毫不含糊的) and He has made the way known, the way to do that work through the Spirit by the Word of God.

This meant two things for Joshua. It meant he needed to know the law of God in order to keep the people in proper relationship with the almighty. Moses had warned them and Joshua that they were by nature stiff-necked (硬着颈项) and disobedient. They needed reminding. Joshua needed to discern when the people were falling away and too had to have the ability to show them the way of truth. He could not rebuke sin if he does not know what sin is. He cannot show the way of righteousness (义) if he does not know what that is.

Leadership is not for the lazy. Joshua needed to plan for battle, be in prayer and in scripture, while leading his family and watching over his own life. That too is part of the obedience Joshua needed to lead as a man of God in the way of God. He was in that sense to be like Adam ruling for God. He was then to do that in a godly and loving manner. Moses found out when he representing God lost his cool and was punished for it. Leadership is not for the emotional lazy either. Joshua was to be that man of Psalm 1 and Psalm 15. He was to be a man of integrity (正直). In so doing he could expect the deeper relationship with God and a more abundant grace.

Be strong and of courage! It takes strength and courage to be obedient. It means to do the right thing in the most difficult of times. It means to love even though you will be met with venom. It means to take the hit without hitting back. It is to be truly righteous and holy. It means that the leadership must know God. We think of Paul's words to the Ephesian elders:

I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. **28** Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (监督).^[a] Be shepherds of the church of God,^[b] which he bought with his own blood.

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One of those commands then was to be strong and of good courage: God would go with Joshua.

Comfort The Lord then promises his presence (同在) and nearness to Joshua. The way that God was with Moses so now He would be with Joshua. He could count on God for he saw in a very close way what the Lord accomplished through Moses and the way that Moses talked and walked with God.

Once more the Lord appeals to what Joshua knows and has experienced. He appeals to what Joshua saw between God and Moses. There Joshua saw how God related to one man in a very special way. In fact that the fact that God was now speaking with Joshua in this way was itself revealing. God was already with Joshua speaking with him and giving him comfort for the future. This is the way of God initiating showing grace and kindness for a man who was faithful and concerned.

It would of course be nice if God would speak to us today I suppose. It would be nice if we could be sure be hearing his voice directly. Yet by faith and the Spirit we have just read and heard his voice. As he was so he will be with you. We can count on that. If he was not there would be no hope and no possibilities of leadership in the church. No man is gifted enough and strong enough. If God was not with us then how could we stand and where would we look. But we rest now in the Words of Jesus that first he is with us and because He will by His Spirit use us as he sees fit. To be sure now we have heard we must be obedient and we must strive to live in accordance with the whole word of God.

What a comfort it is to belong to Christ. What a comfort to know that we may not rely on our strength but may, and ought to rely on the power and the strength of God!

So we lift our eyes to hill for our help comes from the lord who made the heavens and the earth. Amen