

Message #4

Joshua 1:10-18

There is a very sober N.T. verse of Scripture that sits in the New Testament for the Grace Age. The verse is Hebrews 13:17 that says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account, let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

There is a principle that you do see as you travel through Scripture that is true with O.T. Israel and also true for the N.T. Church, and that is God uses human leaders to get things done for Him. In spite of the fact that leaders are sinful and human and finite, this is still God’s method of moving forward. There must be leadership in any operation of God and that leadership must be committed to understanding and implementing and obeying the truth of the Word of God.

In fact, in our study of Ecclesiology, we concluded that one of the things necessary to actually have a church that God would classify as a church is organized leadership.

TO MOVE FORWARD FOR GOD, GOD’S PEOPLE NEED TO RECOGNIZE GOD’S LEADERS, LEARN FROM GOD’S LEADERS, LISTEN TO GOD’S LEADERS, AND OBEY GOD’S LEADERS.

Now let us be very clear on a critical point. **We are not talking here about blind obedience to any leader who claims to be some religious leader.** Alan Redpath said any leader seeking power should resign and get right with God. God wants humble leaders who have been broken (*Joshua*, p. 31). We are talking about a leader that truly has been called and gifted by God, who seeks to carefully and accurately understand God’s Word and will. You only follow a leader if, in fact, he is presenting the truth of the Word of God. You do not follow some leader who is giving you his opinions about various subjects or leading you in ways contrary to Scripture.

It is submission to God’s leadership that was a critical factor for Israel. In fact, the reason she did not initially end up in her Promised Land was, in part, due to the fact that she would not listen to Moses.

Now it is Joshua’s turn to lead. Joshua is a book in which Israel is going into the land, and if she is going to succeed and reach the Promised Land and enjoy the blessings of God, she must submit to God’s leader and that is exactly how the book opens.

Carefully observe how **verse 10** begins, “then Joshua.” After God had made it clear that He had chosen Joshua and after He made it clear that He would be with him wherever he went, it was time for him to move forward.

He needed to give a series of commands and the people needed to obey those commands and if they would, they would be led into blessings. As one commentator said, “the scene switches from God’s instruction to Joshua to Joshua’s instruction to the officers” (Kenneth O. Gangel, *Joshua*, p. 16).

The text breaks down into two main sections:

SECTION #1 – The commands of Joshua to various people. **1:10-15**

Now there are two specific groups of people that Joshua commands:

Group #1 - Joshua commands the officers. **1:10-11**

Now the officers were recognized leaders of Israel. In Joshua, there is a threefold classification of leadership:

(Classification #1) - There are the officers. **1:10** - Leader in military

(Classification #2) - There are the Elders. (8:33; 23:2; 24:1) - Leader in spirituality

(Classification #3) - There are the Judges. (8:33; 23:2; 24:1) - Leader in society

The Hebrew word from which the English word “officers” is derived is one that refers to those who were responsible to watch and guard and keep the people with the idea of leading them and protecting them and keeping them safe (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 837). Joshua had a well-organized chain of command.

When we look into the book of Deuteronomy, we learn three facts about officers:

Fact #1 - They were wise, discerning and experienced men chosen by the people and appointed by Moses (Deut. 1:13-15). Moses had the final say.

Fact #2 - They were responsible to make righteous judgments in various situations among God’s people (Deut. 16:18-20). They were to judge what is right and true.

Fact #3 - They were responsible to hear the Word of God and then protect and preserve it (Deut. 31:28).

These officers, then, were to protect the people of God by making judgments in accordance to the Word and will of God. They were responsible to lead people in God’s direction.

God’s people will never get to where they are supposed to be without a strong leadership that stands for something. Leaders who think the people rule will never take the people in the direction they should go. Leaders must make judgments and take people in God’s direction, which is revealed in His Word. They are responsible to know the Word and obey the Word and protect the Word and preserve the Word.

Someone wisely said, “A man who wants to lead an orchestra must turn his back to the crowd.” The truth is if you are not afraid to face the music, you may someday lead the band.

Now we may notice from **verse 11** that the officers were to go through the midst of the camp and command God's people to prepare provisions because in three days they were going to cross the Jordan and enter and possess the Promised Land. The whole camp of Israel contained over 600,000 fighting men (Num. 26:2, 51).

There are three observations we want to make from this command to these officers:

Observation #1 - These leaders are not giving suggestions to Israel; they are telling them and commanding them as to what to do.

We live in a day and age when commanding people to do something seems almost foreign to leadership. Most think it is never right. This is not true. Sometimes commands must be given and leadership must give them. Arthur Pink said a true leader and minister for God is neither a pope, nor a figurehead. It is wrong to lord authority over people, but it is also wrong not to lead authoritatively in front of people (*Joshua*, p. 49).

These leaders were doing their job. They were giving commands and expecting people to obey those commands.

In every society sanctioned by God, you need a leader who gives commands at times: Employer/Employee; Parent/Child; Husband/Wife; Teacher/Student. Leadership is needed and it is expected to lead.

Observation #2 - We do not know what the provisions were.

The command was to "prepare provisions" and whatever that meant is what the people were to do. We may assume that the provisions included food. In fact, the Hebrew word "provisions" is one that often refers to food (corn, oxen, sheep). It is interesting that Joshua does not tell them to arm themselves with weapons, but rather a three day supply of food.

The preparation was the people's responsibility, not the leaders. In fact, the entire rest of the book is contingent upon the people's willingness to obey this command to prepare. God does not ever bless laziness. With Divine direction comes human participation. God demands His people move if they are to experience His ultimate blessings.

Observation #3 - There is no mention about the enemies in the land.

These leaders were presenting to the people we are going to enter the land and we are going to possess the land. The faith of the leadership is seen in the fact that they believe God was with them and would give them this land.

When God is working out His perfect will, there will be a few enemies to fight, but God will give victory over those enemies.

Group #2 - Joshua commands the Transjordan tribes. **1:12-15**

Now Joshua had something very specific to say to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh. **What he has to say to them is what Moses had decreed.**

This is significant because this shows that Joshua did not forget about matters pertaining to Moses just because they were on the verge of taking the land.

In Numbers 32:19 (see verse 33), the sons of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh asked Moses if they could have the land on the east side of the Jordan (Num. 32:1-5). Moses was angered because they wanted to settle for land which was not in the Promised Land, which would mean they would not have to help their brothers. Moses decided they could have the land as a land grant; however, he made it clear that they were still to fight for the Promised Land and if they would do that, they would have the peace and blessings of God in their land (Deut. 3:18-20).

What Joshua is doing here is reminding them of their responsibilities. He is reinforcing Moses' instruction. Joshua was remembering the past and he challenged these 2 ½ tribes to remember it too (Joshua 1:13). **Verse 14** says the wives, little children and cattle could stay home. We know 40,000 ultimately crossed (4:13). They were to cross in "battle array," orderly prepared for war.

There are people who think that when new leadership comes into existence they should just forget about the previous leadership that led them in the true ways of God. This will never bring the blessings of God. **Verse 15** says they were to stay until God gave victory to brothers.

When John Miles stepped down as President of GRSBM, the new leadership basically said just forget about his philosophy and forget about his focus on God's Word and doctrines. God demolished that school.

In order for these 2 ½ tribes to experience God's blessings, they needed to follow through on what Moses told them, which was now also being told to them by Joshua. Joshua did not assume these tribes would naturally do this; he specifically addresses them and commands them to do this. He did not beg, or plead; he commanded them to remember the Word of God.

This is a big part of the job of a true leader, communicating the Word of God to the people and admonishing them to obey it.

There will always be a minority group who wants to live life on the fringes of the world. There will always be some in the church who aren't dedicated and faithful. They need instruction. They need to be challenged to obey God's Word. They need to be warned that they better fit in with the whole if they want God's blessings.

SECTION #2 – The response of the people to Joshua's commands. **1:16-18**

The leaders responded to Joshua by saying they would do all that he commanded. They would obey him like they did Moses and any person who would rebel would be eliminated from the nation by death.

So what these leaders promised is that if anyone disregarded Joshua's command, they would put them to death. They are dead serious about their accountability to Joshua.

One commentator said if we had this policy in the church today, you obey God or we will put you to death, funeral directors would be sending us on paid cruises because of all of the business we would send their way.

These leaders knew the importance of obeying God's leader. They were smart enough to know that if they were to get to the place God wanted them to be, they needed to follow God's leadership, which comes through a human.

Do we not see the importance of leaders? Do we not see the importance of obeying them?

God always works through mediatorial leadership and if God's people will carefully follow leaders who are following the Word of God, they will experience amazing blessings.