

PRECEPTS AND PROMISES  
Joshua 1:1-9

Intro: Have you ever wished that you could have lived at some period, some particular period, in Bible history?

Often you will hear people say that they would like to have lived when our Lord was here on earth--but if you had a second choice, what would it be?

It would be interesting to know your answer, and the reason for it.

Tonight I would like to take you to a period in which I would like to have lived--the time when God was ready to take His people into the land which they had anticipated for almost 500 years.

Think what a tremendous time this was. Joshua, you will remember, had been in the land before. He knew what kind of a land it was, but he also knew the problems that the people were going to face. More than that, he knew why the children of Israel had not gone in before, and he knew why his beloved leader, Moses, was not going to be able to take the nation Israel into the land.

Try to put yourself into the position that Joshua was in when God spoke to him the words which we have read in our Scripture reading tonight!

How carefully he must have listened! We are always inclined to listen more carefully when we have seen failure, and the loss of blessing which always follows that failure.

Those words, "Moses my servant is dead," could easily have caused Joshua to turn down the responsibility that was to be his IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE PROMISES AND THE PRECEPTS WHICH FOLLOWED.

Let us look first at two of the promises.

I. THE PROMISES.

A. "As I said unto Moses" (Josh. 1:3b).

Link this also with the statement in v. 6b, "which I swore unto their fathers to give them."

Joshua must have been well acquainted with all of these promises. There had been a time before when his heart had beat in anticipation of what God was

about to give to His people, but it had been a long time since those days.

The fulfillment of the promise had been delayed, but God had not forgotten, nor had He forsaken, His original purpose announced first to Abraham.

How the Word of God must have raced through the mind of Joshua!

But there was a second promise.

- B. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5b).

Now his mind would be turned to the life of Moses. If you and I want to know all that is involved in this promise, we should take our Bibles and read carefully from the first chapter of Exodus, through Leviticus and Numbers, to the last chapter of Deuteronomy. How amazed Joshua must have been!

Doubtless he would have thought of that crucial time when Moses had gone into the mount to receive the Law, and had come down to find the people worshipping a golden calf! Then it was that God had told Moses, "I will send an angel before thee . . . for I will not go up in the midst of thee" (Exodus 33:2, 3). And Moses had responded by saying, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Ex. 33:15).

IT IS APPARENT THAT MOSES IS NOT TALKING JUST ABOUT THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD (for that is not subject to change). HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE MANIFESTATION OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD, God's answer to the question of the people, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Ex. 17:7).

How is this experienced?

Our Lord tells us in two verses in John 14--verses 21 and 23. (Read and comment.)

Therefore, Joshua is being told that the one thing above everything else which characterized the life of Moses was his obedience to the Word of God! He had failed at times, yes, but when you look at his life as a whole, here was a man who lived by the Word of God!

What an example to leave for Joshua! Cf. Josh. 1:9b.

Now, on the basis of these promises, let us look at

## II. THE PRECEPTS.

What is a precept?

The dictionary defines it as "any commandment, instruction, or order intended as a rule of action or conduct; especially, a practical rule guiding behavior, technique, etc." (Webster's Collegiate, p. 780).

So it is right that we should call these precepts. God is telling Joshua how he is to live for the rest of his life. This is personal, but the results of his personal life will be seen in the way the purposes of God are accomplished in the ministry that he is to have with the Israelites.

What does it include?

- A. Three times God tells Joshua the same thing: "Be strong and of a good courage" (v. 6; cf. vv. 7, 9).

When we read in 1 Sam. 30:6 that David's people were ready to stone him to death, we also read, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

The same word is used there and translated "encouraged" that is translated three times in Joshua 1, "Be strong."

Joshua was going to face insurmountable odds, but he was daily to find his strength, his encouragement, in God and in the Word of God.

This called not only for reading, but for meditation (cf. v. 8), which according to the Hebrew means to notice every syllable--just like a child would who is learning to read.

Have you ever noticed in reading the Word how much you have passed over previously?

As Joshua went back to the Word of God "day and night," he would find the strength to face any situation that might be ahead.

This, in turn, would cause him to be "of a good courage," that is, eager, alert, excited with anticipation of what he could expect from God.

But this is not all. Joshua is also

B. COMMANDED TO BE OBEDIENT.

This is mentioned two times. Cf. "observe" in vv. 7, 8.

Notice the word, "all," in both verses, and the added explanation, "turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." This means that we are not to try to change the Word, or to follow some other course of action. IT MUST BE IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD.

Then twice again we have a guarantee: "That thou mayest prosper wherever thou goest" (v. 7; cf. also v. 8).

What does it mean to be "prosperous," to "have good success"?

It means to see the purpose of God fully accomplished in your life--and God has made it so simple!

Concl: Very few men have been given the place which Joshua had. However, the way to blessing, the positive assurance of the blessing of God wherever we go or whatever we do has never changed.

I have had a definite reason for bringing this message tonight. I believe that we stand in a very unique place of opportunity. It is wonderful to be living in a time like this. BUT, AS I LOOK AROUND, I DO NOT SEE THE BLESSING WHICH I AM SURE GOD WOULD LIKE TO POUR OUT. Sin is becoming more and more blatant. We do not need to look at any other generation to see more gross manifestations of evil than we do in our day. People are clamoring for more and more liberty, and plunging faster and faster to destruction.

But what do we have in the Church of Jesus Christ? Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says that the outstanding characteristic of the Church today is superficiality. We are superficial in our lives, and we are superficial in our evangelism.

What is the answer to such a great need within and without the Church?

It is to be found just in one place: the lives of the people of God. When we get back to the Word daily and live according to it, the blessing of God will come.

What place are you giving to the Word of God in your life?