God Centred Ministry

Description

Joshua 3:3-5

I want to outline a Biblical principle for all of us who would desire to lead a fulfilled Christian ministry.

Let me first say that God did not create us in order for us to â??just get byâ?• He wants and longs for us to find that place in Himself that is both rewarding and refreshing. The Christian life is one of learning to rely on the goodness and faithfulness of God. Faith is only proved in the doing.

Here in Joshua we have an illustration of what it is to step out in Faith in order for us to â??prove Godâ?•.

Letâ??s remind ourselves of the situation. The children of Israel have been in the wilderness for 40 years, all the previous generations have died, including Moses the great leader and the only two people who came out of Egypt and who were still alive were Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua, who has been leader in training under Moses, is now elevated to leader as per the direct instruction from God (see Joshua 1). He has been directly instructed to lead these homeless, wandering nomads out of the wilderness experience into a land that offers much more.

Just so we can get some clarity here I want you to notice that Joshua is the Hebrew form of the Greek word Jesus (or more precisely Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Joshua). The word literally means â??Jehovah the Saviourâ?• or â??Salvation of Jehovahâ?•. So we see we have a direct parallel here between Joshua and Jesus. I also want you to note at this point that Joshua was not always called Joshua his name originally was Oshea which means Salvation, it was Moses in Numbers 13:16 who changed his name from Salvation to Salvation of Jehovah. Moses recognised something in this young man that one day he would become a saviour. Just as God set Jesus apart for the sole purpose of Salvation and redemption.

The Israelites, for 40 years, had lived by Godâ??s mercy. A God who provided their daily food in the form of quails and manna (Godâ??s provision) to a place where He would

provide for them by His Grace, something they did not earn or deserve.

What we find in the book of Joshua is not just a story about a group of wandering nomads but a story that holds deep spiritual principles about learning to live by Godâ??s grace in new found freedom. This story of moving out of a wilderness situation into a plentiful situation is as much a spiritual experience as it is a physical experience and I believe that it is a journey we all need to take if we are, in any way, going to be able to live by faith in and through Christ in our ministries for God.

If we are to minister, share, encourage, enable, enthuse or influence other peopleâ??s lives and situations, if we are seeking to â??make a differenceâ?•, then we have to first experience what God has made available to all mankind. Our ministry has to be founded on a firm foundation, that of God himself where Christ is the chief cornerstone.

Here in Joshua 3:3-5 we have three basic steps for us to undertake if we want to move from the place of a meagre, captive wilderness experience to a place that is plentiful and free then we need to engage with and follow these 3 verses:-

- v3 Command
- v4 Check
- v5 Condition

Command

Joshua 3:3

We read that â??after 3 days the officers went through the camp saying when you seeâ?¦.â?• Just as a recap if we read Joshua 1:11 we find that Joshua had instructed the officers to go through the camp informing them to get ready, â??prepare yourselves..in three days we are moving outâ?• This instruction would have been a nonsense to the people that heard it as the first question they would have was how on earth are we going to cross the river Jordan when it is in full flood? Yet the command was headed and three days later the officers went through the camp with a second instruction â??when you see the ark of the covenant of the Lordâ?¦ then remove from your place and go after it.â?• The people did not appear to stop and question the leaders they â??believed Godâ?• and prepared themselves. Faith is only implemented when we move beyond the call and step out and follow. Just so we are clear faith is only faith when we move beyond the word and step out into what God has promised. The promised land was never meant to be something that the children of Israel were to inherit because they were better than the inhabitants already there, it was all about God wanting people to worship Him and the only way He could do that was to wipe out sin, disobedience and unbelief, which meant

providing a way by faith into and through the physically impossible. This story demonstrates just that. For further reading on this thought you can read Deuteronomy 9:1-6 which tells us that God hates sin but wants worshipers.

So the command has gone out â??when you see the arkâ?•. This little word â??seeâ?? in the original Hebrew is an action word without respect of time. The word is as relevant today as it was all those years ago to the Israelites. The ark of the covenant represents God in the midst of His people and what they were commanded to do was when you see the ark of the covenant you are to leave your place and follow it. That meant they had to be ready, shoes on, bags packed, animals rounded up and ready to go. This is a God on the move are we ready for all that God has for us or are we going to hang back and wait and see? What we need to observe and act on here is that you and I are presented with a choice, we can choose to follow and not know where we are going or we can choose to sit and wait and see. The truth is that this may be a literal call, leave your country and live somewhere else but what is more likely is this will be a spiritual move or awakening that God has put within our hearts to find more of Him, to find Him in the land of plenty. Surely that has to be better than a wilderness experience?

Check

Joshua 3:4

When we have heard the officers, when we have seen the ark and when we have left our place, our perceptions and preconceived ideas, then we have to keep the ark (God in the midst) in view. What the children of Israel are being told is always keep God in focus but do not get to close, do not get over familiar, He is an holy God and therefore should be respected as holy.

They were instructed to keep about Â½ mile or 1 kmâ??s distance between themselves and the ark, when God is moving the best advice is just to follow. God wants us to trust His leading He does not want us to dictate terms or mold the direction. In the new covenant, by Christâ??s obedience to death and his resurrection we have this â??God in the midstâ?• living in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must never take the gift of salvation for granted, we must respect the holiness of God and His word. The word in this passage is â??you have never been this way beforeâ?•. We need to always keep Christ in view, walking by faith as Paul describes in Galatians 2:20 â??the life I live I live by and in the faith of the Son of Godâ?•. It is not I that live but Christ who lives in me. It is Christ in me that is the power of my life. It is Christ in me the hope of Glory.

Condition

Joshua 3:5

To this life of faith there is a condition. *Note here in the preceding verses it is the officers and the leaders that gave the call to follow, now we have Joshua-Jesus our great high priest issuing the condition of this great life of faith that these people are just embarking on*. We read that Joshua says, and here is the condition, â??sanctify yourselvesâ?•. To sanctify means to â??set apart as to declare holyâ?•. This is something that each one of us has to do if we have heard the command and have complied with the check then we have to adhere to the condition to ensure our sanctification. In the old covenant â??to sanctifyâ?• would have been a physical washing with holy observations and rituals, in the new covenant Christ has sanctified us by his blood and we are free but that does not mean we take our freedom in Christ for granted or abuse it. Romans 5:20 â?? Romans 6:2 informs us of that. We choose to be holy, we choose to be sanctified just as the command was given by Joshua in 3:5.

So to conclude we need to get ourselves into a position and a place with God that enables us to clear out all the things that hinder us and gets in the way of us following God in the Midst (we need to travel light) .

In order for God to use us for His glory we need to work out by faith that which God has worked in by Son (Son being part of the trinity that we call God). Philippians 2:12-13.

One thing is for sure as Joshua said to the Israelites follow and keep the ark in view, cleanse and sanctify yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

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Category

1. Lessons from Joshua

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