

“Do Not Be Frightened and Do Not Be Dismayed”

Joshua 1:1–9

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I am usually with the high school youth group instead of behind the pulpit on Sunday nights so I don't get to hear Pastor Reeder's sermons on Sunday nights but it's a pleasure to be here tonight with you. Any time I get the opportunity to talk about the youth group it's my love, my joy and honor to be able to serve here and pour into this next generation at Briarwood. We were able to take two mission trips this summer involving over 70 students. We took 40 students to Yakama Washington to work with the Yakama Indians there. We did service projects in the afternoon and then we were at two VBS sites. Then we took Jr High students to Cherokee North Carolina and it's amazing what the Lord does through 13 and 14 year olds on this mission trip. I always tell these young people that if they are in Christ they have the same Holy Spirit that Reverend Barker and Pastor Reeder does. They have the same power residing in them through the Holy Spirit that the Apostle Paul had and I like to remind them of that because they need that. The Lord works through them in amazing ways.

This year we had three of our own students commit their life to Christ while on a trip we take every summer to the Edge at Covenant College and that trip is a chaotic one because it involves around 800 students all over the southeast that come. One of our student interns was able to help lead one of those students to Christ. This intern came through our youth group, left for college and came back as an intern and I praise the Lord for that.

Let's get into our study by looking in Joshua 1:1–9 which says [1] *After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant,* [2] *“Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. [3] Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. [4] From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. [5] No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. [6] Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. [8] This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. [9] Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

God has given Joshua a great task. He has given a command. He has said ‘Joshua you're going to be strong for I have put this task in front of you and you are to be courageous and not frightened. You are not to be dismayed.’ He tells him three times to be strong and then the third time in verse 9 He adds ‘do not be frightened or dismayed.’ That word dismayed means to be distressed or to get to a breaking point. You could substitute the word anxiety in there especially the anxiety that has overcome you.

I Peter 5:7 says [7] *casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.* Concerns are a part of this world. We are going to have concerns and anxieties but I think Joshua is being commanded to think about those concerns that have him. It's one thing to have concerns and it's another thing when those concerns have you, those anxieties begin to control you and they're going to get you at a point where you're going to break. That's what it means to be dismayed so the challenge here for Joshua is to be strong and courageous, but not to be frightened or dismayed. It's an interesting challenge.

I think God is recognizing that there is a fearful task in front of Joshua. He is not telling Joshua that what He has in front of him is easy so that can bring fear but I think what is in front of Joshua is very difficult and it's something that anyone without the Lord, would be distressed over and frightened. If the Lord had said to Joshua 'I want you to go to the Jordan and there will be a lot of inner tubes. I want you to put every Israelite on an inner tube to go across the Jordan. It will be a joy ride and it will spit you out at the land of Canaan. You will be amazed for it's beautiful with vegetation, livestock and no one is there. You get to pick whatever plot of land you want because I have given it to you. That's My promise.' There would be a lot of inner tubes because there were two to three million people at that point but that is not what God has tasked Joshua with. God has tasked Joshua with something that is fearful and if it wasn't He wouldn't have said 'do not fear.'

If I were to tell my kid to go get some cotton candy but don't be afraid, there is nothing about cotton candy to be fearful of so I would never say don't be fearful or dismayed when I said that. The point is the Christian life is not without difficult trials, obstacles and difficult callings. We're going to be faced with situations that are unknown, fearful and stressful. We're going to find ourselves with concerns that begin to control us. We're going to find ourselves in places that we are fearful of that God has called us to but in Christ we can walk through these without fear, with strength and courage for God's glory. I think that's the point that God is trying to make with Joshua. It is not that it's a fearful situation but that God is going to give Joshua the ability to be fearless in the face of fear.

I almost titled this study 'fearlessness in the face of fear' because I think that is what is going on here with Joshua. He is called to a fearful task but God is calling him to not be fearful or dismayed and to be strong and courageous. So I want to take a closer look at the task that Joshua has been called to and how when we're faced with something that brings fear or distress that begins to control us, then how can we be without fear. How can we be strong and courageous? It's one thing to tell someone not to be anxious or afraid which is a good thing to say but it's another thing to tell them how not to be anxious or afraid.

So let's look at Joshua's task which we see in Joshua 1:1-5. First of all, Joshua has been tasked to take over the nation of Israel and that's a pretty big deal. I have often thought about what I would have done if God had called me to follow Reverend Barker, like He did Pastor Reeder. I would be fearful and dismayed but He didn't. Think about how Pastor Reeder felt and he has talked about it. It had to be a fearful thing. Think if he would have had to follow Moses? Deuteronomy 34: 10 says [10] *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.*

When the book of Joshua was written we think Joshua was 80 years old. He had been in Egypt, walked through the Red Sea, walked through the wilderness with Moses and he saw what an incredible leader Moses was, but none the less, his leader had died. He had just had a funeral and now Joshua is put in charge. I would say that is something to be fearful about. That would distress anyone but God was saying 'don't be fearful.'

He is also called to take the people over the Jordan and that's a fearful situation even knowing how God got them through the Red Sea. It still would have been fearful to think how God was going to do that. Will He do it the same way? Will we have to swim? How is God going to do it?

Then we see Joshua was called to go into the land of Canaan. What city did he have to go through to get to Canaan? He had to go through Jericho. Jericho was a fortified city with walls. Looking at this passage, I think if God had told him how he was going to defeat Jericho Joshua probably would have been more fearful because he was going to have to walk around that city seven times, blow a trumpet and then the walls were going to fall down. Joshua didn't know how they were going to get through Jericho. He just knew that to get to Canaan he would have to go through that city with fortified walls. How are we going to do that?

God kind of outlined the boundaries of the land He promised the nation of Israel in Joshua 1:4 which says *[4] From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.* When I started studying this passage a little bit closer I knew that the land in Canaan wouldn't be empty but there were mighty militaries they would have to face. The Hittites rivaled the power of the Assyrian and the Egyptian army.

So God is telling Joshua that Moses is dead and he was in charge. He would have to take two to three million people over the Jordan, through this fortified city of Jericho and then once he gets to the land God has promised he would have to defeat the armies that were there with one of them being the Hittites, but don't be fearful or dismayed. Even though Joshua was facing fear God was going to give him strength and courage to not be fearful.

This is a beautiful picture. So as we look deeper into the text I want to ask you, 'what is your Jericho?' What is in front of you that seems insurmountable that maybe God has called you to? What season of life are you in now that maybe He is bringing great distress, great concern, into your heart, your life, your marriage and your family? Maybe it's a challenge with a job and you're not sure what is going to happen and it's brought distress or even fear. Maybe it's something going on with your family and you have a rebellious child, you're worried about their salvation and is God going to save them? What is going to happen if this child continues to go the way they are going? Maybe there is another issue in your family that you know you're going to have to deal with and it's distressing you, bringing fear.

Maybe you're in a place where God has called you to stand up for Him and you know when you do the reaction is not going to be positive in a worldly sense. You could even lose your job but you know it's the right thing to do yet it will cause suffering and that can cause a lot of fear as we look ahead. Maybe it's a sickness that you have just learned about and there is fear especially not knowing the outcome. Am I going to get through this? Maybe it's something coming up with just a lot of unknowns and that can be a very fearful place. I don't know what this is going to look like and I'm fearful. I'm distressed. I know concerns shouldn't overwhelm me but they are.

That is where Joshua could have been but God commands him not to be fearful or distressed, instead by strong and courageous. How is Joshua going to be fearless in the face of fear? How are we to face fear without fear? How are we to have courage and strength when the season ahead of us is going to be difficult, unknown and fearful? I want to pull out three things and this is not exhaustive. If you're dealing with fear, anxiety or distress this will not be an exhaustive answer but I think it will help. These are things that my wife and I have done when we have been faced with things ahead of us that bring fear. When I feel that fear filling up I

often think about Joshua, how he was faced with fear yet was able to walk forward with courage and strength.

The first is do not be frightened or dismayed but be strong and courageous. How? Rest in God's sovereignty. God appointed Joshua to lead the nation of Israel. It wasn't Joshua's accolades that earned him that spot. God was in control. God was sovereign over Joshua. God is the One who showed Joshua what direction he was supposed to take. God tells Joshua to walk forward. Joshua 1:3 says [3] *Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.* So Joshua had to make sure the sole of his step went forward but it was the Lord who was sovereign over His steps. It was the Lord who gave him the land and who was going to give the Hittites over to him. It was the Lord who was sovereign over the Jordan, Jericho and Canaan.

Joshua was just called to rest because God has a plan so Joshua could rest in God's sovereign plan. I think this would have brought great comfort to Joshua but I think it would have also brought great strength and courage. I would say to you, God has a plan for us and God is sovereign over whatever season of life that you're in, whatever circumstances are ahead of you, whatever Jericho is in front of you that seems insurmountable. God is sovereign over sickness, a rebellious child, and financial hurdles for He is sovereign over all things. We can rest in that sovereignty. Remembering that God is sovereign will begin to banish the fear in our lives.

I want to give you some Scriptures about God's sovereignty to encourage you. II Chronicles 20:6 says [6] *"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you."* Jeremiah 32:27 says [27] *"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"* Isaiah 14:24 says [24] *The LORD of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand."* Matthew 10:29–30 says [29] *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. [30] But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.* Let this encourage you for He is even in charge of the sparrows.

I'm sure we're all familiar with Romans 8:28 which says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* God is not saying that all things are good but all things in His sovereignty are going to work out for good to those of us who love Him. Charles Spurgeon says this about God's sovereignty; There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. So we can trust God in those fearful moments because He is above all, over all and in control of all.

My wife and I often look at each other when there is a fearful season ahead or things get difficult and we'll say 'God has got this.' We are in His hands. He is sovereign and we can rest in that even though we don't know what the outcome is going to be. We do know that God is in control.

Number two, do not be frightened or dismayed but be strong and courageous, how? Remember God's past faithfulness. Sometimes we get into the moment where something is fearful and fear is welling up inside as anxiety is overcoming us and it's hard to see that God is faithful in the moment, that He'll provide and give us strength and courage in the moment. We forget that in the fog in the storms of life so I think it's important that we remember God's past faithfulness. Sometimes it's hard to see His current faithfulness in the storms but remember His

past faithfulness reminds us of His current faithfulness. Remembering God's past faithfulness gives you strength and courage in the present.

We see in the text that God actually directed Joshua to His past faithfulness in the nation of Israel and I think that was to give him strength, courage and the ability not to fear. I think it was also to remind him that when this massive challenge was ahead of him that God would be faithful in the present as well.

God says to Joshua in Joshua 1:5, *[5] No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* God is reminding Joshua that He was with Moses and just as He was faithful with Moses, He was going to be faithful with Joshua. That would have been a great encouragement to Joshua. We believe Joshua was around 80 years old when this was written and think about all that he has seen up to this point in his life.

I had not realize that Joshua was with Moses in Egypt until I started reading the text more closely. Joshua would have seen the Passover. He would have seen Moses lead the people of Israel through the Red Sea. He would have seen God provide safety for his nation and he would have seen God shut the waters over Pharaoh's army. Then he would have seen God lead them by a cloud during the day and by fire at night. Then every single day in the wilderness he would have seen God provide food and water for them. To provide food for two to three million people a day they would have needed 15 tons of food – two freight trains a mile long just to bring the Israelites food. God simply rained it down from heaven. God provided every single day.

Joshua would have seen the time where the Israelites came to the water and it was bitter. He would have seen God turn that bitter water into sweet water so they could drink from it. Joshua would have seen Moses hold his staff up and as long as he would hold his staff up to represent the power of God the Israelites would overcome the Malachite's. Joshua would have fought in that battle and would have seen that. Deuteronomy says that the Israelites shoes and clothes in 40 years didn't even wear out and Joshua would have seen that. That is amazing and it's also a miracle. It seems like we buy our kids shoes almost every two weeks so I can't imagine going 40 years and not buying any shoes or clothes.

Joshua would have seen God's past faithfulness and just as God was with Moses so He would be with Joshua. As he would have remembered God's faithfulness in the past he would have been reminded that it is the same God that was with him now. God is going to provide today for you Joshua.

I don't know if you do this but almost every time I think about the Israelites I think about how dumb and stiff-necked they are and I think I would have never done that. If God would have split the sea, rained down bread from heaven, led me with a cloud and fire, I would never doubt God's faithfulness. Every single time they come to a new challenge or something fearful is ahead what do they do? They say 'God we would have been better off in Egypt.' We're really the same way or at least I know I am. When I'm faced with a challenge instead of thinking about things God has done and how faithful He has been, I panic. Fear begins to well up and stress begins to overtake me. I forget everything.

My wife and I six years ago were told that one of our kids produced minute traceable amounts of her growth hormone and I had no idea what that meant but the doctor went on to say that basically my child couldn't grow. When you go for annual check-ups you typically get to see how your child is growing based on their height and weight in these charts where they plot somewhere between zero and one hundred percent. When the doctor brought out our child's chart there was no line because he said our child didn't even make the chart. She was in the

negative in her weight and height compared to other children her age. He told us she would need a growth hormone and I thank the Lord for modern day medicine for there was an answer to her issue.

I asked the doctor how bad her situation was, like was she just going to be shorter and skinnier than most kids and he said yes but it is so bad that there was a chance her organs may not develop. She may not go through puberty or be able to have children of her own. So we decided to have her take the medicine and he said 'ok, well it's \$30,000 a year.' I just panicked. Then he said 'but most insurances cover it.' Me being the optimist said 'ok we're good.' My wife being the realist said 'did you say most? So that means there are some that don't cover it?' Well, when we started doing the research we realized that our insurance didn't cover it, where they didn't cover injectables unless it was insulin and so we became very fearful. We had distress, anxiety and panicked. I remember thinking 'we're going to have to sell our house. Then I'm going to have to get a new job that pays me \$30,000 more a year.'

Whatever we could think of is what we were going to do to come up with \$30,000 but the Lord was gracious and He began to remind us that He has been faithful to us all along. It took us sitting down and remembering God's past faithfulness to realize that He was the same God and He was going to provide. I remember saying to my wife 'I'm 36 years old and every single day from the time I was born I have never gone without food or drink or clothing and He is batting 1000 and that's a pretty good batting average so why are we going to panic now? Why would God not provide this need?' And that fear was just gone. We were able to look at the Lord and remember His past faithfulness and it put a stake in the ground that He is faithful now. Nothing had changed and He was going to provide.

This story has much more to it but I will shorten it by saying that because our child had tested so poorly on her growth hormone the drug company came back to us and said that she was so bad that we were going to qualify for a program where we were going to get that drug for free. So for six years we received that drug for free which was \$180,000 worth. Now if our insurance had covered it we still would have had to pay a co-pay which meant we would have had to still come up with about \$7,000 a year out of the \$30,000 but God provided above and beyond. It was a blessing that our insurance didn't cover it. So we looked back at His past faithfulness and it reminded us of His current faithfulness.

Matthew 6:30–33 says [30] *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? [31] Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* [32] *For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. [33] But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* Just as God was with Moses so He was with Joshua and that gave Joshua great confidence and strength. I pray that for you to if you are in those moments – remember how God will be faithful every day of your life and He promises that as well, because that's who He is – faithful.

Thirdly and lastly, do not be frightened or distressed or dismayed but be strong and courageous, how? Realize God's present presence. Joshua 1:9 says [9] *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, **for** (because) the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* You could substitute the word 'because' for the word 'for' in this verse. Realize God is with you. Whatever you are going through right now, God is there with you through His Holy Spirit, through His church, and through His Word.

Our oldest daughter was deathly afraid of the water. Usually when you have small children what is most dangerous is them falling in a pool but our oldest was so afraid she would not go near a pool. She was so far away from it that in order for her to fall into it she would have to fall and roll like 20 times before she would get to it, but when I would get in the water she would jump without even thinking. Nothing was different about the situation, except that I was in the water. If I wasn't she would not go anywhere near it.

We're going to be in the middle of fearful situations and situations that are very challenging, hard and bring up fears but God's presence banishes that fear. We need to remember that God is with us. The situation might not change but it's the realization that God is there with us that gives us comfort and strength. Joshua's strength and courage was not his own but the Lord's. He got it from the Lord who was with him every step of the way.

I love this quote by Martin Luther; "I know not the way God leads me, but well do I know my Guide." You may not know what is ahead or what the situation is going to bring but you can rest and not be fearful because you know Who is guiding you. No matter what trial or season or obstacle or suffering that life brings remember that God has won the ultimate victory. There is one thing that everyone who is not in Christ has to be fearful of more than anything else and that's the wrath of God, that separation from God, but if you're in Christ nothing on earth can separate you from the love of Christ.

Nothing can take away what Jesus did for you. Jesus overcame sin on the cross and He overcame death by raising on the third day. Even death we don't have to fear. Even death we can walk into with courage and strength. When most think of Moses they immediately think about the Law, but Moses couldn't go into the Promised Land. The Law can't save you. The Law shows you that you need a Savior. The Israelites needed a Savior. They needed Joshua and Joshua means Jehovah saves. Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus. Joshua was pointing to Jesus and Jesus is the only One who can save us and He has saved us. Because of that we can walk through anything with strength and courage and we have nothing to fear.

Isaiah 54:17a says *[17a] no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed...says the Lord.* We're going to be united with Christ in heaven for eternity. We have nothing on earth to fear and this is why Paul could walk in courage and strength and ultimately even to death in Christ because he knew he could face death with courage and not fear. I Corinthians 15:55 says *[55] "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

I love the story about a dad who was driving a truck and has a small son with him. A wasp gets inside the truck while he is driving and the dad did probably what he shouldn't have which was go after the wasp because the son was scared and he caught the wasp. He squeezed it in his hand and opened his hand to show his son. His hand was beginning to turn red because of a prick in his hand and he said to his son, 'This wasp will never be able to sting again. I took the sting for you.' That's what Jesus has done for us.

Jesus took the sting of death so now when we think about death and the Bible talks about it, the Bible often calls it sleep, because we fall asleep and we're with our Savior. So we have nothing to fear, not even death itself.

Romans 8:35-37 says *[35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."* *[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your Word for we can open Your Word and in the moments we need wisdom, insight, truth and guidance we see that Your Word is completely sufficient. Lord, it is sufficient in the moments we find ourselves in where we're fearful, dismayed and distressed. We can look at Joshua and we can see how You have provided for him. We can see that Joshua was able to rest in Your presence. He was able to remember Your great faithfulness and that gave him great courage. Lord, he was able to realize Your sovereignty. I pray that we would be able to do that and to face whatever You have called us to, God, without fear and distress and that we would be courageous and strong. We know we can't do it ourselves for it has to be because You are with us and that You are leading us. I pray, like Joshua, that we would not turn from Your Word to the left or to the right but that we would obey it completely and fully. We pray these things in Your Son's Name, Amen.