

THE MAN AFTER WHOM JESUS WAS NAMED

Joshua 1:1-11; 24:14-15,29

No man is indispensable to the work of God. Like Tennyson's famed brook, men may come and men may go, but God and His program go on forever.

After Moses' death, Joshua came on the scene. He was a man full of the spirit of wisdom. The hand of Moses had been laid upon him.

In Joshua 24:29 we read, "Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord." The expression, "the servant of the Lord", is one of the greatest epitaphs of the Bible. It was spoken of Moses, one of the greatest men in the Bible, when he died "on Nebo's lonely mountain;" and here it is spoken of Joshua at the end of his great and heroic life. Text. That always, and pre-eminently, he was. No man ever lived who more deserved that epitaph.

At first it may seem strange that when our Saviour came into the world He was given for His personal name the name of Joshua, which means "The Lord is salvation," and in connection with Christ meant that He would save His people from their sins. In certain great respects they are much alike. Both did wholly the will of God. It was said of Joshua that he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses; and on the cross Jesus cried, "It is finished." Joshua foreshadows Christ in the complete obedience of his life to will of God. As Joshua led people across the River Jordan and conquered Canaan for them, so Jesus by the power of His death and resurrection leads His people through the Jordan of death and into the Promised Land of peace and rest.

I. The Courage of The Man After Whom Jesus Was Named.

We do not know much of his earlier life. We know that he was born in Goshan, in the land of Egypt; that he was the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim; that he was of the twelfth generation from Joseph; and that he was about forty years of age when Exodus took place. There was quite a circle of young men around Moses. Joshua was the choicest and most capable of them all. The relationship between them was beautiful and significant. It is the contact of maturity and youth, of master and scholar, and it suggests to us that deep natural order which ensures that the young evermore step into the heritage of the aged, and carry on the progress of the world. Moses made a firm, solid-set man out of his follower and minister. He succeeded because he worked patiently for many years; and he did his work quietly. Joshua stood ready to run Moses' errands. Joshua had admiration and reverence for great and good men. We really are what we admire, love, and honor.

Joshua's first appearance on stage of Israel's history was when he commanded the battle against the Amalekites at Rephidim. Joshua did the fighting while Moses did the praying on the hilltop. Moses chose him to lead the battle against the Amalekites. Joshua was attracted, inspired, moulded, and ruled by the creative genius of Moses.

His next appearance was when he went up with eleven other spies to spy out the land. After a forty days' journey, the spies returned. Ten advised against attempting to conquer the land. When the congregation heard their report, they murmured against Moses. But Caleb and Joshua dissented from the majority, declaring that if they went up at once and fought for it, they could conquer the land, and that it was well worth fighting for. People were enraged at their report, and took up stones

to stone them. But before they could carry out their purpose, the glory of the Lord appeared at the tabernacle and God sentenced the people to the forty years of wandering in the desert because of their lack of faith and lack of courage. Of all the host who were adults when they left Egypt, only two, Joshua and Caleb, were permitted to see the Promised Land and enter it. Joshua belonged to a noble minority.

The inferiority or grasshopper complex still prevails. Whenever a great work is to be done, a forward step taken, or an attack made upon an entrenched iniquity, about ten out of twelve are timid and afraid, and see themselves as grasshoppers in the presence of the difficulty to be overcome and great enemies to be conquered. Only about two out of twelve are strong enough and bold enough to march forward in the name of the Lord. The courage of Joshua was the high and invincible courage that is founded upon faith. When you have faith in the success of a cause you are not afraid and not ashamed to fight for it. What is needed is men who are baptized with the courage of Joshua, a courage that is born of unfaltering faith in God and His Word.

After Moses' death the word of the Lord came unto Joshua saying, "Moses, my servant is dead. Now therefore arise." Think of this statement in the light of its human value. "Moses is dead." What a calamity! The mighty mind and mighty arm of one of the earth's mightiest is gone--what then? The human cry is, "The cause is lost!" But, no, God lives. Yes, God lives, and He changes leaders, but that makes no difference to a truly godly people, because human leaders, however great, are subservient to God, and true Christians look to Him for leadership. Loyalty to a new leader in any enterprise for God does not dishonor the former leader but honors God. Disloyalty to new leaders dishonors both God and former leaders.

The character of Joshua may be seen in the commands of God to him and also in the closing declaration of his own life.

First command is, "Be strong and very courageous." This word from God carried with it the implied promise that God would supply grace for both the strength and the courage.

To be strong is an imperative Christian duty. God wants no weaklings in His service.

Courage is another duty. It is a responsibility from the human standpoint. Courage is human strength, God-sustained. It is moral vigor, God-inspired. It is old-fashioned backbone, divinely stabilized. Lincoln saved a young soldier from being shot because of desertion in the heat of battle, saying, "Perhaps the poor fellow couldn't help having a pair of cowardly legs." A colored saint was asked what he would do if God asked him to jump through a stone wall. He replied, "The jumpin' would be up to me, and the gettin' through would be up to God."

True courage is conscious strength. To be spiritually courageous is to be conscious of God's backing for any enterprise, however dangerous. This was basis of courage of Joshua.

II. The Character of the Man After Whom Jesus Was Named.

It is not difficult to understand the character of Joshua. He was strong and of a good courage. We think of Joshua as the leader on the field of battle. But we must remember that this man of devotion was schooled for his great task by fellowship

with the Divine. Back of his heroic achievements was a deep acquaintance with the holiness and majesty of God. Joshua was able to keep up the heart of a whole people by his hopeful bearing. It was one of the most difficult tasks which was entrusted to Joshua, but he did it well.

Of Joshua's character one cannot speak too highly. He did not feel any danger. He did not shrink from any hardships. He was not deterred by any difficulties. He rested on the promise of God, which was, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee," and with such a leader Joshua felt that he could go anywhere and do anything. If men have confidence in their captain, they will follow him. You remember, when Franklin set out on his expedition to discover the North-West Passage, how eager the seamen were to sail with him. They knew their leader, and were assured that, if the undertaking could be successfully carried through, he was the man to do it.

A noticeable trait in the character of Joshua was his fidelity to the trust reposed in him. He felt his responsibility to God, Who had appointed him to the charge of the hosts of Israel, and whether he pleased the Israelites or not, he was determined to please God. He possessed the noble spirit of perseverance. He feared neither toil nor danger so long as God and duty called him to the work.

Joshua did not live for himself but for his people. He did not ask any glory, and was not ambitious for any greatness. True greatness never consists in aspiring for place and power, nor in trying to be great; but rather in humility of mind, and in self-forgetfulness for the common good.

III. The Choice of the Man After Whom Jesus Was Named.

Joshua was a man of decision. There was never any wavering, faltering, hesitating or delaying when the way of duty had been made clear to him. He had decided for the God of Israel and the deeds of everyday life rang with that decision. Not only did he choose God for himself, but he called upon others to choose Him. "Choose you this day whom you will serve."

Choice is a fact in each of our lives. We have:--

1. The choice of one of two lives--godly or the godless. Men have free wills and the power of moral choice. You can choose to do God's will or choose not to do it. Paul chose one way, and Pilate the other; Wesley chose one way and Tom Paine the other; Moody chose one way and Ingersoll the other.
2. The choice of one of two deaths. Tom Paine chose one death and Moody the other. Paine called on Christ for mercy one moment and blasphemed the next. Moody lay dying and said to his son, "Earth recedes, heaven opens. No, this is no dream. Will, it is beautiful, it is like a trance. If this is death it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me and I must go. This is my triumph. This is my coronation day--I have been looking forward to it for years. I am going home." Paul and Judas chose different deaths.
3. The choice of one of two resurrections. Your choice decides the difference between emerging in Christ's likeness and coming up from the grave in your sin to meet God's condemnation.
4. The choice between one of two destinies. Throughout eternity you will be somewhere. Where will you be? It will be in heaven or in hell. Your destiny

depends on your choice. You may have everlasting punishment in hell or everlasting life in the presence of God.

This choice is personal. Your nearest and dearest relatives cannot make the choice for you. Some men boast that they have their religion in their wives' names, but they never get to heaven on that. Every person must give an account to God. Joshua said, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

Joshua made the right choice and built for the future. One of the noblest things about him is his thought for tomorrow, his desire for the generation which was to follow him. He had a passion for righteousness in Israel, not only Israel of today, but of tomorrow. When he realized that his own race was nearly run and that he had fought his last battle, he called for the leaders of the people, and telling them that he was going the way of all the earth, exhorted them to hold fast to their faith in God. The approaching sunset of his own life in no respect diminished his faith in or his zeal for God.

To plan for the future, to think of those who come after us, is the mark of the highest faith and the noblest courage.

"An old man travelling a lone highway
Came at evening cold and gray
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream held no fear for him,
But he stopped when he reached the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

'Old Man,' said a fellow pilgrim near,
'You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way,
You've crossed the chasm deep and wide,
Why build you this bridge at eventide?'

The builder lifted his old gray head,
'Good friend, in the path I have come,' he said,
'There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm which has been as naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be,
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim,
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."

Why not choose, and choose now, to serve God? Then at the end yours too shall be the glorious epitaph of Joshua, "the servant of the Lord."