



13 Joshua Chapter 3 Stepping Out and Stepping In

On Wednesday night we studied Joshua chapter 2 and learned some wonderful biblical truth by looking into the life of Rahab, the prostitute. This woman lived in Jericho and had made her living by selling her body. She

was not an Israelite, rather she was a Canaanite. Somewhere in her life of brokenness and emptiness, she had heard about the God of Israel. The text doesn't tell us when her belief occurred, but at some point, without knowing much about Him, she put her faith, trust, and belief in the God of Israel.

There are many things happening at this point in our story. Jericho is about to be judged, but God has not forgotten His own. There among the heathen of Jericho, God had devised a plan to rescue this believing woman. As the spies entered the city, they were led to the house of Rahab, where Rahab put feet to her faith. She was ready to step out of the wilderness of her life, and to step in to a relationship with Yahweh. She recognized that these young men who visited Jericho were Israelites, and she knew from hearing the stories that these were the people that God had rescued from Egypt and had brought safely through the Red Sea. We don't know from the text, but these were perhaps the first Israelites that she had ever met.

With a moment's notice, she made a decision to hide them in flax stalks up on her roof. She put herself in great danger by doing this because the King of Jericho had been informed that these foreigners had gone to her house. As the king's soldiers came searching, Rahab stepped out in faith again when she didn't turn them over to the king. Instead, she sent the soldiers on a wild goose chase. (That was step number two of her act of "stepping out" in faith.) She then lowered the spies down the wall on a scarlet rope and made a deal to hang that same scarlet rope in the window when Joshua and his soldiers were to make their attack. The scarlet rope marked her and her household so that they could be identified and saved. I didn't mention it on Wednesday, but I think that scarlet rope placed in her window was a symbol much like that blood that was

placed on each Jewish home on the night of that first Passover. I am sure that there were probably some in the family that were shocked that they were being saved by the black sheep of the family.

Rahab's faith was so strong that she is mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 in the great hall of faith. ³⁰ *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.* ³¹ *By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.* (Hebrews 11:30-31, NKJV).

She stepped out and acted on her faith, which is what made her distinguished among women. Without ever knowing the full effect of her actions, long after she was dead she would be in the direct line of ancestors of the Messiah Jesus who saved the world from its sins. Matthew tells us in his gospel that Rahab was the mother of Boaz, who was the father of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David (Matthew 1:5). Jesus came from the line of David and will rule on the throne of David for ever and ever and ever. Yes friends, "stepping out" in faith has consequences far beyond what we are aware of or know. Let's now begin our text for the day.

3 Then Joshua got up early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they spent the night there before they crossed.
2 Then at the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; ³ and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. ⁴ However, there shall be a distance between you and it of about two thousand cubits by measurement. Do not come near it, so that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." (Joshua 3:1-4, NASB).

Let us pray. Finally we've gotten to the point of crossing the Jordan and moving into the Promised Land. This was God's intention from the beginning. Whenever God moves us FROM somewhere He moves us TO somewhere. God moved the Israelites FROM Egypt in order to move them TO the Promised Land. God moved you FROM sin and darkness to move you TO an abundant life. We learned in the Book of Ephesians that every believer is the recipient of a spiritual inheritance. It is yours when you come by grace to Jesus, but this inheritance is merely seen from a distance until YOU WALK IN IT.

Notice that the Ark of the Covenant is about a half a mile out in front of the people. I think this was so that ALL could see what was going on. God's presence was there for a purpose, "so that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." That's how it is with God in our *own* lives. There is a bit of a difference though. Under the Old Covenant, holiness was all about "distance" away from the purity

of God. Remember, the priests were the only people that could get near to the Ark of the Covenant. God would come and meet with mankind there at the mercy seat, which was basically the lid of the Ark. Distance was a characteristic of the Old Covenant, but intimacy and closeness is a major characteristic of the New Covenant. The writer of Hebrews tells us, *"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16. NASB 1995).

Just as the Ark was out in front of the people directing them to where they should go, God is now close-by to us, directing us through His Word and through the Holy Spirit to navigate our way through life's journey. As Dr. House mentioned last Sunday, God has a specific course that He has laid out for each of us. Likewise, He has a race with all of its twists and turns designed for each of us. It is when we follow that course and that race that we can come to the end of our journey and state along with the Apostle Paul, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;⁸ in the future there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."* (2 Timothy 4:7-8, NASB).

⁵ Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do miracles among you."⁶ And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So, they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people. (Joshua 3:5-6, NASB).

I think it is interesting that Joshua didn't tell the people to sharpen their swords or to ready their spears. He told them to CONSECRATE themselves. They were supposed to set themselves apart to God's work by cleansing themselves spiritually for the battle. They were to consecrate themselves as they made themselves ready to see a miracle of God. We no longer consecrate ourselves through ritual washing and cleansings, but we can indeed consecrate ourselves to the Lord daily. Listen now closely to what I am going to say. When you came to Christ, the debt was paid for all of your past, present, and future sins. You are secure in Christ. You can never be unborn spiritually once you are born again. You can however "get out of fellowship." This is something I used to teach kids. I called it the "doctrine of spilled milk." As a child I remember sitting around the dinner table with my mother, father, and sisters. We were, of course, my father's children, but if one of us spilled our milk by being careless (usually me), things at the table got tense. That sweet fellowship was broken. It never changed my status as my father's child, but the sweet fellowship around the table was gone. The milk on the table had to be dealt with.

That's how it is in our own lives. Even though we are His children, when we engage in sin, we break that sweet intimate fellowship with the Father. We need to get back into fellowship. We do this by doing what 1 John 1:9 tells us to do: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (KJV). Confessing our sins means that we agree with God that what we have done is wrong, and we ask Him to forgive us, which puts us back into sweet communion with Him. Let's move on in our passage. With a simple change of heart and a whispered prayer we are back in the ball game. We are no longer on the sidelines. We are back "around the table" in sweet fellowship with the Father. Let's read on.

⁷ Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they will know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. ⁸ So you shall command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" ⁹ Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." ¹⁰ And Joshua said, "By this you will know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly drive out from you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. ¹² Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. ¹³ And it will come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, that is, the waters which are flowing down from above; and they will stand in one heap."

¹⁴ So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan, with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, ¹⁵ and when those who were carrying the ark came up to the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the ark stepped down into the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), ¹⁶ then the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So, the people crossed opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan. (Joshua 3:7-17, NASB).

What we are seeing here is another Red Sea event. This was a time of the year when the Jordan River came out of its banks. A couple of weeks ago while on vacation, I went to listen to one of my favorite pastors, Kevin Broyhill, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist

Church in King, NC. Brother Kevin said there is reason to believe that the river was a mile wide at flood stage. It was humanly impossible for the people to cross. God didn't tell them to prepare their rafts. He didn't tell them to build a bridge. He didn't tell them to find a way around the river. He told the people to STEP INTO THE RIVER.

You see God had a plan that didn't correspond with the human plan. God told them to step into the river and they did. And *when* they did, the scripture tells us that the waters piled up. Basically the Jordan River came to a standstill. I guess it was like an invisible dam and the people **CROSSED OVER THE IMPOSSIBLE** to reach the **PROMISED LAND**.

There is so much here I don't even know where to get started. When God saved you from your sin, He took you out of Egypt. He took you out of your sin to take you somewhere. He gave you all that was your inheritance when you got saved. When the children of Israel left Egypt He took them miraculously across the Red Sea. That's sort of a picture of a baptism. He also took them to the base of Sinai where they received the law. That is a prefiguring of you receiving the Holy Spirit. The moment you and I were saved, God made that **FIRST DEPOSIT** of our inheritance; the Holy Spirit who came into us and lives and dwells within us. Like the Jews, many of us have wandered in the wilderness looking at the Promised Land from afar. It is time to step out of the desert and step into the Jordan.

Stepping into the Jordan means stepping out in faith like Joshua did back in Joshua chapter 1. Ten of the spies gave a bad report. Joshua and Caleb gave a good report. Joshua believed that God would deliver on the promises that He had made. How do we know this? The scripture tells us, ¹⁰ *Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,* ¹¹ *"Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'" (Joshua 1:10-11, NKJV).*

Church, it is time to step out of the wilderness and into the Jordan and receive the full inheritance of God. This does not mean that you will go into a Promised Land void of any problems. Rather it means that you will step into a land filled with giants, foes, problems, and rough times, but **GOD WILL BE THERE WITH YOU IN IT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY**. This can start with you claiming the promises of God. Consecrate yourself and step into the Jordan. The Promised Land is just on the other side.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by

Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.