



# **CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS**

**7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613**

**(319) 277-0924**

**[INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](mailto:INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)**

**[WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](http://WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)**

## Courageous Faith for the Future

July 25, 2021

Rev. Lee Laaveg

TEXT: Joshua 1:1-9 (NASB1995)

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 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 success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

---

---

Dear friends,

Every believer's life will hold moments of major transition, either by our personal choice or by the circumstances of life as they unfold. We need courageous faith to move forward into the future God has for us. How are we going to navigate these moments of

major transition? God has a word for us. In the same way he promised Joshua, the leader of God's people, he has a word for us. "You can be strong and courageous, for I, the Lord, your God, and with you wherever you go." That's a word that will carry us into our future in anticipation of God's blessing and glory.

Did you hear about the pastor who was meeting with three of his church elders? The pastor was passionately sharing a vision he believed God had given him for the church, and the elders listened as the pastor urged them to implement this vision. They took a vote, all three elders voted "no". The pastor, of course, voted "yes". "Well pastor," said one of the elders, "you're outvoted. Let's close in prayer." But the pastor was not ready to give up. So he prayed that God would show the elders that it wasn't his vision, but God's vision. And just then a lightning bolt came through the window, splitting the table where they were seated and knocking the elders and the pastor to the floor. Well, the lead elder got up off the floor and said, "Well, pastor, the vote is now three to two. You still lose." Do we have vision for a God-given future?

In the book *Alice in Wonderland*, written by Lewis Carroll, Alice says to the Cheshire Cat, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here." The Cheshire Cat said, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." Alice said, "I don't much care where." The Cheshire cat said, "Then it doesn't matter which way you go." Vision is important. In fact, for people of faith, vision is absolutely essential. Do you remember what it says in Proverbs 29:18? "Where there is no vision, the people perish." A vision is a clear, compelling path to a future reality. People without vision have much less energy in life, less passion for life. They have no sense of purpose. We all need direction. We need a sense of purpose in life in order to feel fulfilled. Why do you get up in the morning? I like what Paul wrote in Philippians 3. He was writing from prison when he said, "I want to know Christ. I want to experience the power of his resurrection, even to share in his sufferings. All the rest of life is a pile of dung. I haven't obtained it yet, but I press on toward the goal of the prize of God in Christ Jesus. I want to lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ." For every believer in faith, we want to live lives rooted in the Word of God and its promise. We want hearts and lives that are warm and exude love to all the people God brings to us. We want hearts that are inviting and welcoming to Christ. We want to be devoted disciples who grow deep and faith in the knowledge of God, learning from God's word and from the spirit of Jesus all our lives. We want to be generous. We want to build each other up and encourage each other. All those elements of a vision for God's people will never change.

Therefore, you, dear believer. So with Paul say it: "I press on to lay hold of all those things."

But I also want to enter fully into the promised land of what God has for me. Back in the days of the lyrics of folk spirituals, the euphemism "promised land" meant Heaven. "Crossing over the Jordan" was a way of speaking of physically dying. So when we spoke of Promised Land, we meant the end of the journey, and the glory we enter into. But, in this sense, I want to challenge you and say that the promised land for us who are living today by faith is to enter fully to embrace the promises of what God has intended for us in his will – that we would live in the power and the presence of Christ's spirit and unpack all those treasures in the word as promises true for us. Remember ever hearing this quote by D. L. Moody? "If God is your partner, make your plans big." God has plans that you would be a shining light for him in the area in which you live. Jesus called it "the abundant life."

But to have courageous faith, we'll meet obstacles. Every life, I say it again, every life will have moments of major transition and to move forward to embrace that future reality we need courageous faith. In Joshua's case, he faced the obstacle of grief. His friend and mentor, Moses, had died. He was gone. And Joshua no doubt was sad and lonely. And it was at that moment, of course, that another obstacle – fear – entered in; that he was inadequate for the calling of God. He had self-doubt. Did he have the ability to lead God's people? Did he have the energy? Was he up to it? Did he have the gifts? Sometimes we can be seduced into an idolatry of thinking, "It's all up to me," and we forget that God is our partner and his power is at work in us and through us. Joshua also knew that in the promised land they would have to battle giants. You remember Joshua and his friend Caleb were among the 12 spies the Moses sent into the Promised Land to see what was there. Ten of them came back and said, "No way." But Joshua and Caleb came back and said, "It's an awesome land flowing with milk and honey, and the Lord has promised it and we will do it." But we do encounter giants that are obstacles to our courageous faith. Another obstacle, of course, is Satan, the prince of darkness. He seduces us, tempts us. He distracts us. He throws our priorities into disarray. He tries to paralyze our effectiveness.

Listen: when faith wavers, God keeps repeating his promises in order to strengthen and rekindle our faith. Keep walking forward in courageous faith. Faith must step forward boldly to fulfill the vision that God gives to each believer's life. In Deuteronomy 31,

when Moses was still living and he was at Joshua's side, he reminded him: "Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid to tremble. Remember, the Lord goes with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you." There always comes a moment in time where we as God's people must enter the promised land. We must cross over. We must transition into the new future reality that God has for us. We must embrace all that God has intended and all that God has promised. Notice that in Joshua 3, when the Jordan River was at flood stage in the spring of the year where the current of the waters would be swift, when the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders actually stepped into the waters, only then did God part the waters before them and all of the nation of Israel crossed over. We need to step forward boldly in faith, and God's power will be released to work on our behalf.

Notice also that in Joshua 4, God instructed them to take 12 stones from the midstream of the Jordan and build an altar. God wanted them to mark the moment and celebrate what he had done. That type of celebration strengthens our faith, increases our gratitude, but also creates a joyful anticipation of the future that God has. God will give us the victory. God will go before us into the future that he has in mind. So, we need regularly to build an altar and pause to say thank you to God for all he has done. That leads to our faithful obedience and it should lead to a genuine, spontaneous worship of him as God. As believers in Jesus Christ, we know that we have a future of glory. We should approach that future with great expectation and great hope. And the vision of desiring to serve the Lord Jesus should always percolate inside us and be kept alive, Helen Keller once said, "The only thing worse than being born blind is to be born with sight, but with no vision." If we've lost our vision of how we should serve the living God, then we can and should pray for God to renew our vision or give us a fresh vision of what he wants us to do.

And please, believer, don't get stuck in doing ministry the way we've always done it before. Steve Covey once said, "Live out of your imagination, not your history." In the journey of faith, we must embrace change. Kathleen Norris, the author who wrote about faith in the pioneering days of our American nation, said this: "Disconnecting from change does not recapture the past. It only loses the future." So, the spirit of the living God flows into us and through us and among us; that spirit is always flowing and fluid, so the work of us as God's people needs to be fluid, also adaptable, ready to embrace change. I urge you, therefore, believer in Christ, to attempt great things for God. Hudson Taylor, one of the greatest names in missionary history, said, "Many Christians

estimate difficulty in light of their own resources. Thus, they attempt very little and they always fail. All spiritual giants have been weak people who did great things for God because they reckoned on God's power and his presence to be with them." Taylor's operating principle was: attempt great things for God.

My mother, Viola Laaveg, had a plaque that hung on our wall. I remember it as I grew up as a boy, seeing it every day. "The future is as bright as the promises of God." The future is as bright as the promises of God! We're emerging from a post-pandemic world. Many things have changed, but what hasn't changed? Jesus is Lord, and we belong to him. We're surrounded by people that need the Lord's love and peace and hope. The spirit of Jesus is still loose and at work in our world, especially in the hearts of we who are his people. The word of God is still powerful, as it says in Isaiah 55, it won't return void. So, to a world of unpredictability and uncertainty, we are called to offer God's love and his presence as a sure foundation. Someone wrote, "Culture needs an alternative to itself, not an echo of itself."

So, believer in Jesus Christ, the world is craving the love the God alone can offer. Shine distinctively, shine like stars. If the culture is in discord, be a peacemaker with the spirit of reconciliation. If the culture is full of hatred, love freely in Jesus' name. If the culture is filled with people who are discouraged and even despairing, share your reason for hope. Do you remember the old story of the mouse who crossed a bridge over a deep ravine on an elephant's back? And as they crossed, the bridge shook. And when they reached the other side, the mouse said to the elephant: "Boy, we really shook that bridge, didn't we?" Of course, the mouse can't shake the bridge, but when the mouse teams up with the elephant, yes, it can. And when you and I team up with the Lord Jesus Christ and approach the future in the confidence that his spirit fills us and God himself goes before us and that we are more than conquerors in Jesus Christ, we approach the future full of hope. You're a follower of Jesus, so I encourage you to follow him in courageous faith into the future of ministry that Christ has for you.

Amen.