



CONSECRATION
JOSHUA CHAPTER 5

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Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land after they'd wandered for 40 years in the desert. Between the desert and the Promised Land there was a barrier they had to cross; the River Jordan.

Historians say that between four to six million people crossed the River. How did they manage it? Did they swim? No. Build a bridge? No. They walked! God divided the waters and they passed through on dry land.

But before God could divide the waters, the priests had to get their feet wet. God commanded them to go ahead of the people and put their feet in the river. Then He divided the waters. In other words, they had to take the initiative. Take that first step. Add virtue to their faith. Act on what God had told them.

The priests stood there in the river bed until all the people had crossed, standing firm in what God had told them. Then, they took twelve stones from the very place that their feet had been planted, and raised them as a memorial, a testimony to what God had done. And what happened there serves as a very relevant testimony to us.

Perhaps we're in a spiritual desert in some areas of our life. In these very areas, God wants to bring us into a Promised Land. But first we must cross the River Jordan. And to cross it we have to act like the priests did, taking the first step of obedience to God and then standing firm in what He's told us. And our obedience, together with what God has done for us in dividing the waters, becomes a testimony for us, for our children, and for others. Every time we obey God, a stone of testimony is raised in our life.

So, Israel crossed the Jordan. Now they were in their new land. But the problem was, other tribes were already living in the land. And they weren't going to say to the Israelites, "Welcome! Great to see you! Take our land, it's yours!" In the same way, when God brings us into new places in Him, there are obstacles. Habits to break, fears to throw aside. And the devil gets angry when God does something in our life. He hates us and tries to put obstacles in front of us. We may have entered the Promised Land in certain areas of our life but there are battles to fight, because the inhabitants don't want to give up land.

But it really doesn't matter how angry the devil is. **The devil's anger can't take away from the testimony of what God has already done in your life.** The devil throws things in your path and at times you get discouraged. "O Lord, perhaps I really don't have the victory. Perhaps I'll never be free in this area. In fact, perhaps you really haven't done this thing in my life. Perhaps my testimony isn't what I thought it was. I belong in the desert." But you need to remember, all that comes from the devil and he can't take away what God has done in you. Glance at the twelve stones of testimony, at what God has already done in you, and you'll be encouraged.

And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel. (Joshua 5:1) The Israelites were on their way to victory. God had done something for them and in so doing put fear and dread in the hearts of their enemies. And the truth is, when God does something in your life, the devil is afraid.

At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. 3And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the

foreskins... 8And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. (Joshua 5:2-3,8) When we read the Bible, we should try to imagine what it would've been like to actually be there. Imagine being an Israeli warrior in this story! You've just entered the Promised Land, ahead of the people, knowing there are battles to fight. You're ready for battle, and you all know you're heading for victory, because God is acting on Israel's behalf. And suddenly God tells you through Joshua, "Now we're going to circumcise you all."

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Without anesthetic, circumcision is a pretty painful operation. It leaves you unable to do anything much while you're healing. How strange, circumcising an army that's surrounded by enemies! Incapacitating the army! By commanding them to be circumcised, it seems God put all His people in a position of weakness and vulnerability before their enemies.

Why was this circumcision necessary? God's ways are simply not our ways, and His thoughts are simply not our thoughts. But, He knows what He's doing.

Beginning with Abraham, circumcision had been a sign that separated the people of Israel from other nations. God had spoken to Abraham, ordering him to circumcise himself and his sons. *The LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly... 10This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* (Genesis 17:1-2, 10-11) Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and His people; and a sign of consecration, that is, of being dedicated to God, set apart for Him and obedient to Him.

In the old covenant, Joshua had to circumcise the people, to show they had a covenant with God and were consecrated to Him. But there's also a circumcision in the new covenant. Not a physical circumcision, but a circumcision of the soul. In both cases, it's actually a sign of strength, not of weakness.

Just like many things in the Old Testament are symbols of spiritual realities, circumcision is a symbol of what is ours spiritually in Christ.

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. (Galatians 6:15 NIV) What matters in the new covenant? It doesn't matter if you're physically circumcised or not. What matters is being born again. What matters is a new creation.

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:28-29 NIV) In other words, we should be circumcised in our heart, in our soul.

By "heart" we don't mean our physical heart. We mean the essence of who we are, our character, our soul, the center of our being. When I say to my wife, "I love you with all my heart," I'm not talking about my physical heart. I'm talking about my being, about who I am. Some cultures don't use the heart as a symbol of the center of their being. They use the kidneys! So I'd have to say to my wife, "I love you with all my kidneys." It's a matter of culture, but evidently in Biblical times the heart represented the center of who we are. So we need to be circumcised in the center of who we are, in our soul. Be rid of the old man and become new creatures in Christ.

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:9-10) We're complete in Christ. Perhaps you feel, "But I'm so messed up, I'm such an incomplete person..." No. In Christ you're complete. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12)* When we surrendered our life to Christ we were born again, raised to a new life, and circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands but by Jesus

Christ. As we daily choose to walk in the new life we walk in the reality of this circumcision.

So for us also, circumcision is a sign of the covenant we have with God; the covenant of the new birth through which we are His children and He our Father. We have something special, between us and God. A covenant. A relationship of Father and sons. When Satan accuses you, telling you, "You are a failure!" you can respond, "I'm in a covenant with God Almighty. Want proof? I have my problems, but in Christ, I'm a new creature!" Amen?

It's also a sign of consecration; meaning we belong to Him, and so we choose to do His will not our own. Just like the people of Israel were chosen as God's special people and circumcision was a sign of both their belonging to Him and their ongoing obedience to Him, so we've been set apart for God and the sign of that is that we want to live for Him, and live in Him. We choose to walk in the new and not in the old. In other words, we pick up our cross and choose to believe and obey God.

The name Joshua means Savior, as does the name Jesus. In the old covenant, "the savior" Joshua led the people to the Promised Land, and circumcised them with flint knives. In the new covenant, the savior Jesus led us to the Promised Land and circumcised our hearts not with a knife made by hands but with the Spirit of God.

After being circumcised, these warriors remained in the camp, waiting to get better. They were in pain and probably didn't even want to stand up. Relating this to your life, God has shown you to obey Him in a certain area. You've taken the initiative, stood firm, and now you're walking in what God wants, entering the Promised Land. Now, He asks of you more consecration, more surrender. He asks of you a new level of belief. That's like being circumcised after crossing the Jordan.

While you choose the new, while you take steps of obedience to God, perhaps you feel weak and vulnerable. He's doing something in you. You haven't passed this way before. It's something new in your life and you feel somewhat insecure and weak. But it's alright! That's how the Israelites felt after being circumcised, but **circumcision didn't mean God had abandoned them; in fact it was a powerful sign that God was with them!**

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (2 Peter 1:5-7 NKJV) We all have areas in which God is dealing with us. And perhaps in those areas we're already walking in faith, believing that God will do what He's promised. Perhaps there's already virtue; we're taking the steps He wants us to. There's knowledge also, we basically understand what God's doing in us in that area.

But now we must add more qualities. *To knowledge, self control...* **Self control means managing your daily life according to what God has already shown you.** For example, in my adolescence I struggled with anorexia. I lost a lot of weight. God healed me totally but it was a process. At the beginning I had to have faith, "God, you can heal me." Then virtue, "God, I'll believe that You love me and so there's reason to look after my health. I will eat." Then knowledge, "God, I've had this problem because I've felt that no-one really loves me." But in addition to all that, I had to add self-control. At times I didn't want to eat, but I had to exercise self-control, "God, you've told me to eat, so I'm going to do it, even if it feels strange, I'm going to eat." And I had to add patience. Sometimes these things take time to be healed.

I know a woman who in the past suffered greatly from depression, even contemplating suicide. God has healed her completely. Now she doesn't struggle with those things like before, but she has had to make decisions. She's had to add virtue to her faith, knowledge to her virtue, self-control to her knowledge, patience to her self-control. She's had to learn to be patient with herself.

So, we mustn't leave aside walking in faith, virtue and knowledge, but rather build on those qualities, adding self-control, patience and so forth. The people of Israel were already in the Promised Land. They had faith, virtue and knowledge. Now they had to

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add self-control and patience. “Lord, we’ll be circumcised because it’s necessary; it’s something You want. We’ll have patience, waiting in the camp while we heal; and then we’ll go forward.”

And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. (Joshua 5:9) What is reproach? In this context it means oppression. In Egypt the Israelites were slaves. Just like we were slaves in our old life before coming to Christ. It doesn’t matter how free we felt, we were slaves. Living under the oppression of the devil. He offered us sweets and once we’d eaten them we suffered. Like the witch in “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.” She seduced the young boy Edmund, giving him sweets, and then it became clear who she really was. And he suffered. That’s what the devil’s like. That’s what it was like for us when we lived in Egypt, in the old man.

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So here God says to the Israelites, “Today I’ve taken away the oppression of Egypt from you.” They had physically left Egypt forty years before, but true freedom came when they recognized they belonged to God, in covenant with Him, set apart for Him; and they were obeying Him.

God says the same thing to us. Through the new birth and consecration, He’s taken away the oppression of who we were before. The oppression of the devil, of sin, of the old man. Perhaps our bondage to feelings of shame, guilt or inferiority. All that was part of our life in Egypt. God has taken all that away from us because we’re new creatures and we’re in a covenant with Him. We’re His sons and daughters. Now the enemy doesn’t have dominion over us. We’re in Christ and we’re complete.

And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. 11And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. 12And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. (Joshua 5:10-12) Manna was food sent from heaven. Where were they living when God sent the manna? In the desert. There’s not much food in the desert. So God sent them manna every day. But you could only gather enough manna for one day. If you tried to store it up to have enough for a few days, it got infested with worms. For us, the manna represents the grace of God and His word to us individually. When we’re in a desert in a certain area of our life, God sustains us. Daily He sends us words, something to help us survive. Have you experienced that?

But when we enter into the liberty and abundance of the Promised Land, we don’t need God to send us a word every day to sustain us, because there is fruit in the Promised Land.

When I was struggling with anorexia, I needed someone every day to say to me, “You need to eat! Eat!” Like the manna falling from heaven, telling me I had to eat. And the next day I needed someone to encourage me to eat again. But once God had set me free and brought me into the Promised Land in that area of my life, I no longer needed people to tell me, “Eat!” because now I was free.

So, in the areas of your life that God touches, where you’ve left the desert and entered the Promised Land, God will make you fruitful. In the desert God provided manna every day for the Israelites to eat. In the same way in the desert areas of our life God gives us daily words to sustain us. But when we enter the Promised Land, we begin to eat of the fruit of the land. Then we begin to sow and reap. We walk in a sustainable victory. There is abundance. There is variety. There is peace and there is rest.

To the degree that we obey God, taking the initiative, crossing the Jordan, allowing Him to circumcise our heart, we come into a maturity in which we no longer need a word or sign from God every moment. We simply know that He’s with us. We eat the fruit of the land in peace and rest.

Perhaps there are deserts in your life. Areas where in your heart you know there’s a lack of peace, of rest, of fullness. God wants to lead you from the desert into the Promised Land.

If God's been speaking to you recently, telling you to believe certain things in His Word or to do certain things, it's because in those areas of your life He wants to make you fruitful. He wants to bring you into the Promised Land. Where you can sow and reap in peace. Where you can rejoice in abundant life.

The Bible says when Joseph named his sons, *the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.* (Genesis 41:52) God will make you fruitful in the land of your affliction. Do you believe it? In the areas of affliction in your heart He will make you prosper. He will make you fruitful. It's a promise of God. In the very areas of your life, mark my words, **in the very areas of your life where you feel the weakest, He will make you strongest.** In the areas where you have internal struggles, battles and deserts, He wants to make you fruitful.

You'll have to cross the Jordan. You'll have to stand firm and allow God to deal with you. And He will make you fruitful. He will do it. Amen?

To finish up, let's read a few more verses. *And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? 14And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? 15And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.* (Joshua 5:13-15) This man wasn't an angel, because he allowed Joshua to worship him. He was called the Captain of the army of the Lord.

He was Jesus. Jesus existed before the creation of the world. He hadn't yet been incarnated as Jesus the carpenter, but in various places in the Old Testament he appears in human form. Not to live here, but to fulfill certain missions. This was one of those missions.

Joshua asks him, "Are you for us, or for our enemies?" Perhaps if he was for them, Joshua would have invited him to fight at his side. If he was an enemy perhaps Joshua would have removed his head or at least commanded him to submit to them, telling him, "The land is now ours." But the man just responded, "No."

In other words, "I'm not for you, and I'm not for your enemies. I'm the Prince of the Lord's armies. I'm of God."

I know this will be disappointing to some, but **God doesn't exist to help us realize our plans.** He has His own plan. We're part of His army, serving Him and not ourselves. Our focus shouldn't be our satisfaction, but rather Him and walking with Him. Jesus said, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matthew 6:33) **We take possession of the Promised Land not principally for our own benefit, but for Him.** In so doing we'll be blessed, and He'll make us fruitful. He does satisfy our needs. He does! But He doesn't exist in order to satisfy our needs. He exists because He exists, and He is God.

If I have a desert area in my life and I want to be fruitful in that area, I should ask God for that. But my life focus should not be that God solve my problems. Rather, I should say, "Lord, I'll follow You wherever You go. And while I follow You, You'll bring me into the Promised Land. You'll give me the victory. But my focus isn't my problems, my deserts, my wounds. My focus is Jesus, and I want to follow You. I want to follow the Captain of the army of the Lord."

I imagine that after this conversation Joshua saw things from a new perspective. He was there with his army, ready to conquer the land that God had promised them, but now he understood that we're not here primarily to be blessed. We're here to glorify God, to serve His purposes, and while we serve in His army we'll conquer and enjoy the Land.

God will make you fruitful in the land of your affliction. It's a promise. Think for a moment about the areas of your life where there's affliction; and choose to believe God. Believe His word. "God, you'll make me fruitful. I'm going to follow You, focused on You. I leave my problems and my areas of affliction in Your hands. You'll heal me, and I'll obey what you tell me to do to bring about that healing. But my focus is You. Lord, I'm here for You. I love you very much." Amen.

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