



VIRTUE
PART TWO

PETER BELLINGHAM

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And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue... (2 Peter 1:5 KJV) “Add to your faith virtue” means, “take the initiative.” Act. Begin to do what God has told you. As believers, many of us are still hesitant to add virtue to our faith. We have concerns about what God has told us to do, so we don’t go ahead and fulfill what He wants.

Why do we have concerns? Because we’re afraid. Let me explain. Whenever God shows us, “I want you to do this...” we have to make a decision. But at times we’re afraid of what will come against us if we move forward in the Lord. Afraid of what may oppose us if we obey what He’s telling us.

Why did Peter get out of the boat to walk on the sea towards Jesus? (Matt 14:25-31) Because Jesus was there. He saw Jesus; and Jesus was calling him. Peter wasn’t thinking about sinking. Before getting out of the boat he didn’t say “But Lord, what’s going to happen to me? Surely I’m going to drown. Human beings can’t walk on water.”

We’re human beings. Perhaps thoughts like this did in fact cross Peter’s mind; but he still went ahead and got out of the boat. He took the initiative and added virtue to his faith.

So, at times we’re fearful of what may happen if we take the steps God gives us to take. “God, if I do this, this person’s going to reject me.” “God, if I do that, Satan’s going to attack me.” “God, trusting in You isn’t enough. I’m afraid my needs won’t get met that way.”

When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, he said to her, “Take of that fruit. Eat it! You’ll become like God! All your needs will be met if you take that fruit!” And Eve had to make a decision. Unfortunately she made the wrong decision. “Lord, perhaps the serpent is right... If I obey You and don’t take from that fruit, perhaps my needs won’t be met. It’s not enough to just trust in You, God. I need something more.”

She was afraid that if she obeyed God, and just trusted Him, her life wouldn’t be so full and rich. She would miss out on something. At times we think the same way as Eve. “God, if I take this step of obedience, I’ll lose something that’s important to me.” Perhaps a friendship. A job. A certain person’s approval. Some dream. We all experience fears like that. Maybe in large areas, maybe in the details of our life; but at times due to fear we don’t go forward in what God wants.

These fears can be compared to giants, to the inhabitants of the Promised Land. But what does God say about the matter?

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went... (Joshua 2:1) Another translation of the name Joshua is Jesus. Both names mean Savior. Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. In this passage, before entering the land, he sent two spies to check it out.

So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them: 24And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us. (Joshua 2:23-24) The inhabitants of the land were afraid of the

THE
ISRAELITES
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people of Israel! In the same way, the giants, our fears, are afraid of us when we're taking the steps God has given us to take!

And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. 2And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; 3And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. 4Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. (Joshua 3:1-4) It was time for these Israelites to move forward. And it's time for us also to move forward in simple obedience to the Lord. To open our hearts and choose to trust Him and trust what He says.

**FOR YOU HAVE
NOT PASSED
THIS WAY
BEFORE**

It says, *ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.* The people had to follow the Ark of the Covenant. This Ark had great significance.

- It represented:
- (a) **God's throne.** His Lordship. In the tabernacle, it was placed in the Most Holy Place.
 - (b) **God's presence.** His presence dwelt above the Ark, in the Most Holy Place.
 - (c) **God's law.** The Ten Commandments were stored inside the Ark.
 - (d) **God's mercy.** On top of the Ark was the Mercy Seat, and every year the high priest offered sacrifices there for the forgiveness of the people's sin.

The physical Ark of the Covenant was a symbol, a shadow of the spiritual reality in the New Covenant. We don't know exactly where the physical Ark is today (Indiana Jones tried to find it in his movie, "The Raiders of the Lost Ark." But that was just a movie...) More importantly, we do know where the spiritual Ark is today. It is within every believer.

The Ark represented the throne of God. Where's the throne of God now? In our hearts. If we've accepted Jesus, He now lives in us as our King. His throne is within us. It represented the presence of God. His presence lives within us. It represented the law of God. His law is written on our hearts. And it represented the mercy of God. We've been forgiven and we live in His mercy.

For us to follow the Ark means that we follow the Lordship of Christ, that we live in His presence, that we trust in His mercy and that we obey the voice of His Spirit in His Word and in our hearts. The Ark of the Covenant represented all these things; and in order to follow after it we have to live in their reality.

The Israelites followed the Ark. They didn't move ahead of the Ark. What does that teach us? When we say we must take the initiative, we don't mean taking the initiative to do our own thing. We mean we taking the initiative to follow Jesus our Lord; to follow His Spirit wherever He goes.

For ye have not passed this way heretofore. The Lord wants to bring you to new places in Himself. Places where you haven't been before. Amen? New levels of freedom and power in Him. New stages in His will and plan for your life. So it's important to follow the Spirit. To go at His pace, following Him and not trying to overtake Him.

On one occasion Peter was fishing and hadn't caught anything; and he said to the Lord, *Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.* (Luke 5:5) He was following the ark, listening for God's voice so he could obey Him.

And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you. (Joshua 3:5) Sanctify yourselves. In other words, open your hearts to Him! **He will do wonders among you! Do we believe that? Do we believe He will do wonders among us? I believe it.** Like Jesus said to Lazarus' relatives when he died and they were mourning, *Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?* (John 11:40) If we believe and open our

hearts to Him, He will do wonders among us.

And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. (Joshua 3:6) Who took up the Ark? The priests. Are you a priest? **Everyone who has Christ as their Savior and Lord is a priest.** And now we don't carry the testimony of God in an ark, but rather in our lives. Now the law of God isn't written on tablets of stone, but rather on our hearts. Our promised land is not a physical place on earth but rather it's Jesus Christ and the abundant life that is ours in Him.

It was the priests' responsibility to carry the Ark. So as we're all priests, it's all of our responsibility to carry the testimony before the people. In other words to take the initiative to obey the Lord and so carry the testimony forward.

I hope and believe that my children will carry the testimony of the Lord further than I have been able to. In each generation God wants His people to carry His testimony further. And in your personal life God wants you to carry the testimony further. Let's not be lazy. Let's go further with God.

As we do that, we move towards the Promised Land, towards the fulfillment of His promises in our lives and towards the fulfillment of His plans for His glory.

What would've happened if the priests had said, "Well, God will fulfill His plans without our help. We don't really need to carry any ark to any river. Let's wait here and see the glory of God." They wouldn't have seen anything. They'd have remained in the desert.

And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. (Joshua 3:7) If we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up in due time. Just like He did with Joshua.

And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan. (Joshua 3:8) Between us and the Promised Land, between us and the fulfillment of God's plan for our life, there's a river. In fact in various areas of your life there's a river between you and the abundant life that God has promised you. The river represents the things that apparently oppose us; the obstacles that make it difficult for us to do what God wants. But like the priests, on God's command we have to come to the bank of that river and put our feet in the water. Take the initiative. Add virtue to our faith.

I believe the priests were men who were by now mature in the Lord. So when He told them, "Put your feet in the river and I'll divide the water," they believed Him. We should do the same. When God says, "I want to work in your life in this area, but you must put your feet in the water," we need to believe Him. "OK, Lord, I'll do it. And I'll trust that You will divide the waters."

And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. 10And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. 11Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. 12Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. 13And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. (Joshua 3:9-13) When you take the initiative and obey God, He acts on your behalf and you'll be endued and filled with courage and faith; knowing that He's with you and that He'll drive out the giants, the inhabitants of the land, from before you. **But you must take the first step.**

And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; 15And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) 16That the waters which came down from above

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stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. 17And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. (Joshua 3:14-17) What did the priests do? Once they'd put their feet in the water, and the water divided, did they go on ahead of the people to enter into the land? No. They stood firm there in the river which had dried up, and allowed the people to pass through before they themselves moved forward.

**DO WE
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There's a principle in this. The priests took the initiative. They entered the River Jordan. And afterwards, they stood firm in the middle of the Jordan until all the people had passed through on dry land. After taking the initiative to obey God in any area of our life, **we have to stand firm in what God has told us until we see the fulfillment of His promises.**

For example, God told me, "Go to Honduras." So I took the initiative and went. And before long came the trials and battles. I had taken the initiative, but what was I going to do when the tests came? I had to stand firm in God's will. "God, you've told me to be here. I'll stand firm, trusting in You; no matter what storms are brewing over our heads, I'll stand firm here in the Jordan until You tell me You want something new."

But also for this very reason, 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) That's exactly what the priests did. They had faith. God had told them, "Go and stand in the Jordan." By getting into the river and staying there, they added virtue to their faith. They already had knowledge because God had already explained to them, "This is what I'm going to do." There in the River Jordan they added to their faith self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. How? Because they waited patiently while the people crossed over.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14Stand therefore... (Ephesians 6:13-14) **Stand firm; and then... continue to stand firm!** Stand firm, no matter what battle has to be fought. Stand firm in what He's told you.

Jesus did just that. Having taken the initiative, He stood firm in what God wanted for Him; no matter the cost. While he was hanging there, crucified, suffering incredible physical and emotional pain, *the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.* 42"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' " 44In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. (Matthew 27:41-44 NIV) There He hung, suffering, and the people mocked him, calling out to Him to come down from the cross if He truly was the Son of God. But did He come down from the cross? No. In spite of the temptation, he continued to stand firm in His Father's will. Glory to God.

He completed what God wanted in His life. And so should we. As fathers, as husbands, as mothers, as wives, as single people, as young people; we must stand firm in each detail of what God wants for us.

There's not time to mention all the battles that have to be fought in order to stand firm in what God wants. But we all know what some of them are.

And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, 2Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, 3And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night. 4Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: 5And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: 6That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? 7Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan

were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. 8And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. 9And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day. 10For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hastened and passed over. (Joshua 4:1-10) Why did they take stones from the river and set them up in the Promised Land? And why did Joshua also set up twelve stones in the Jordan? To serve as a testimony to remind the people of what God had done there. Stones of testimony.

Each time you take the initiative and carry through with what God wants, a testimony is raised in your life. Stones were set up in exactly the place where the priests had stood firm in the river; and stones from that exact place were set up in the Promised Land. In the same way, in exactly the area in which you've taken the initiative and completed what God wants you to, there is a testimony. You've written a new chapter in your history with God; and that history becomes a testimony both to you and to others of God's very-present power and faithfulness.

And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them: 13About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho. (Joshua 4:12-13) Why did the armed men cross over first? They were entering the Promised Land; why was it necessary to have 40,000 armed men go ahead of the people?

Because having taken the initiative, having carried through with what God wanted, there were still battles to fight.

Once we've taken the initiative and crossed the Jordan, there will still be battles to fight so we can possess the Promised Land. If we want to go on with God, our life here on earth is full of spiritual battles. We have to get used to that fact.

Until we reach heaven, there will never come a day in which God will say to us, "No more battles to fight!" So, we have to be spiritually armed. Ready for battle. Thus we'll conquer the Promised Land, little by little. Thus we'll advance, living God's plan for our lives. It's worth fighting these battles because the abundant life in Christ is a good land, and God's promised us the victory!

And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, 16Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan. 17Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan. 18And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. (Joshua 4:15-18) When did the priests come up out of the Jordan? When God told them to. Not a moment before and not a moment after. We take the initiative following God's commands for our life. We stand firm in what He's told us. And **we only move forward when He says so.**

And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. 20And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. 21And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? 22Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 23For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: 24That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever. (Joshua 4:19-24) God was able to show His power because the priests took the initiative and obeyed Him. In the same way, as you take the initiative to obey Him, God will be able to do wonders in and through your life.

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

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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) Amazing! The giants. The powerful kings that lived in that land. The barbaric people who lived there, who offered their sons as sacrifices to their gods. This powerful people, this courageous people, this savage people, found themselves fearful.

Fearful of who? Fearful of the people of Israel. Why? Because Israel was well-armed? No. They were armed, but that wasn't why. Because God had done a miracle for Israel; the miracle of dividing a river. And He was able to do that because the priests took the initiative and obeyed Him.

These accounts are examples for us. Perhaps we don't have to cross physical rivers, but we do have to cross spiritual ones. Areas of our lives in which God wants something.

Think again about what God wants you to believe; and about what He wants you to do. Are you still afraid of the giants? Are you afraid of what might come against you if you take the initiative and do what God is showing you? Are you afraid of the possible consequences of going further with Jesus Christ? Are you fearful of what might happen if you follow Him wherever He wants to take you?

Take courage from the story we've just read. If you believe, you will see the glory of God.

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