

## FAITH IN THE FUTURE

The bishop's car ran out of petrol. His wife, who was a passenger remembered seeing a garage half a mile back down the road. He got out the car and started to search the boot of the car for a container, but the only one he could find was his baby grandson's potty - so that had to do! He trudged to the petrol station, then carefully carried it back with a full container of petrol and started to carefully pour the contents from the potty into the petrol tank. Driving by was the leader of a new independent church. He recognized the Bishop and saw he was in need and stopped his car to offer-help. As he approached he saw the bishop pouring the contents of the potty into the tank. The man-gasped and said: "If I'd known they had faith like that in the Church of England I'd never have left!"

Today I want to talk with you about faith. This will be my last message here as Lead Pastor of Bramalea Baptist Church. I want to leave you with a sense of expectancy, looking towards the future because I know that God has plans for this church and that it's best days are still to come.

Jos 1:1-9 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them--to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates -- all the Hittite country -- to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

### 1. Faith in the Purpose of God (1-2)

Israel was about to cross into the promised land. For the last 40 years they had wandered in the wilderness, but now they were about to take possession of the land that God had promised them. It had been a very long and often difficult road that had brought them to this place. To top it all off, Moses had died. The one who had led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness was gone and now the people were looking for direction.

It is in this context that God speaks to Joshua and says, "Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them." God was confirming that Joshua would be the next leader of the people and he was telling the nation that it was time to move forward. Their years of wandering in the desert were over. God had something new planned for them that was different. Things were changing. Their life in the promised land would be different then their lives in Egypt and in the wilderness. We see that God had a plan. He had a purpose for Israel.

God has a purpose for this church. He has a plan, and it is a glorious plan. The next few years may look a little different than they have looked in the past, but God has a plan and God knows what He is doing. Trust His plan.

I heard a story about a midwestern farmer 50 years ago. The farmer went to the bank to borrow money to buy seed to plant corn. He fired up the old tractor and plowed for many days. He spread fertilizer and planted the corn. The rains came and the corn grew, but one day millions of grasshoppers flew on to his property. His precious crop was being consumed. He went to God in prayer, and he waited for a word but all he kept hearing was 'let the chickens out.' He kept thinking how letting out his chickens would save his crops. In obedience the next day he opened up the chicken coups and let them out.

The chickens came out and ate the grasshoppers. The chickens thrived, and soon there were lots of baby chickens running around. The eggs were so plentiful that the farmer started loading up the eggs and chickens and traveled the area selling them. He ended up making far more money with his chickens than he ever would have made with the corn. All the farmer was thinking about was losing his corn. God had a different plan, a better plan.

God is faithful. Most of you know the great old hymn Great Is thy Faithfulness. Naomi and I had that sung at our wedding. That hymn was not written as the result of some tragic event in the life of Thomas Chisholm but as a powerful witness to his daily walk with Jesus as he experienced "morning by morning new mercies I see". Pastor Chisholm always trusted his Everlasting Father to take care of Him, sustain him, and provide for his daily needs. Just before his death in 1960 he wrote about God's power: "My income has never been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. But I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care which have filled me with astonishing gratefulness."

God is faithful, He will provide. Have faith in the purposes of God. But there is more;

## 2. Faith in the Promises of God (3-4)

Joshua and the people of Israel had trusted in the Lord for everything in the past 40 years. Every day God would provide the food for them to eat. The manna would fall from the sky feed them. They had learned to depend upon God's provision. As soon as they crossed the Jordan, the manna would stop. It would be a new day. They would have to start growing their own food again.

When Israel had first spied out Canaan some 40 years before, only Joshua and Caleb had put their faith in God and believed that He would give them the victory. Joshua knew that God always fulfills His promises. Joshua knew that God had promised Abraham that he would become a mighty nation and that his people would inhabit the land of Canaan. His faith rested in the promises of God. Now God was renewing that promise to him;

Jos 1:3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates -- all the Hittite country -- to the Great Sea on the west.

What a promise! We as Christians also have the benefit of knowing that God keeps His promises. We have the entire Bible to read and discover all the promises that have been fulfilled. Jesus was the ultimate proof that God keeps His promises.

2Co 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

God promised Joshua something very important. He assured him victory. In taking hold of these promises, Joshua would be given all the places that his foot trod. He was assured the victory before he even began.

A promise from God is a statement we can depend on with absolute confidence. Consider some of the promises that we as believers in Jesus can rest in today.

He promises us His presence. Heb 13:5 "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

He promises us His protection. He says in Gen. 15:1 "I am your shield, your very great reward."

He promises us His power. Isa. 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you."

He promises us His provision. Isa. 41:10 "I will strengthen you and help you."

He promises us His leading. John 10:4 "he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him."

He promises us His purposes. Jer. 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

He promises us His rest. Matt 11:28 "I will give you rest."

He promises us His forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

He promises us His goodness. Psalm 84:11 "no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."

He promises us His faithfulness. 1 Sam. 12:22 "For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people."

He promises us His guidance. Rom. 8:28 "All things work together for good to them that love God."

All these promises are ours for the taking. They assure us and strengthen us and give us hope. No matter what giants we face, we know that God is with us. Faith in the purposes of God and the promises of God;

### 3. Faith in the Power of God (5-8)

Jos 1:5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you...

I believe that Joshua was a man of faith. He took God at His word and believed everything that God told him and promised. Because of this, God's power was available for Joshua. God tells Joshua in verse 5 that "no one will be able to stand against him all the days of his life." Now that is power.

Israel did not have to wait long to see a demonstration of that power. The first obstacle that they faced after crossing the Jordan was the fortified walled city of Jericho. It was a fortress.

There was no way that Israel, in its own strength, could defeat it. They did not have the siege works, they did not have the time it would take to surround it and wait for it to starve to death. As they approach the city, Joshua witnesses in a powerful way God's provision;

Jos 5:13-14 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 Neither, he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come..."

When they reached Jericho, they did not attack it. They just marched around it for 7 days and then blew the trumpets and shouted and the walls fell down. God gave them the victory. I am sure there were some who were there that day who were thinking "This is an unusual military strategy" and they would be right. It was a strange thing to do, but it is what God had told them to do.

My prayer for this church is that it would always do what God tells it to do. That it would never lose sight of that. Our job as a church is not just to do what the government wants us to do or the community. Our job is to proclaim the Good news of Jesus and to never compromise on what the bible says, even if that leads to persecution. It is only in obedience that we can experience the power of God.

There was a man who got lost in the desert. After wandering around for a long time his throat became very dry, about that time he saw a little shack in the distance. He made his way over to the shack and found a water pump with a small jug of water and a note. The note read: "pour all the water into the top of the pump to prime it, if you do this you will get all the water you need". Now the man had a choice to make, if he trusted the note and poured the water in and it worked he would have all the water he needed. If it didn't work he would still be thirsty and he might die. Or he could choose to drink the water in the jug and get immediate satisfaction, but it might not be enough and he still might die. After thinking about it the man decided to risk it. He poured the entire jug into the pump and began to work the handle, at first nothing happened and he got a little scared but he kept going and water started coming out. So much water came out he drank all he wanted, took a shower, and filled all the containers he could find. Because he was willing to give up momentary satisfaction, he got all the water he needed. Now the note also said: after you have finished, please refill the jug for the next traveler." The man refilled the jug and added to the note: "Please prime the pump, believe me it works"!

We have the same choice to make, do we hold on to what we have because we don't believe there are better things in store for us, and settle for immediate satisfaction? Or do we trust God and give up all that we have to get what God has promised us? I think the choice is obvious. We need to pour in all the water, trust God with everything. Then once we have experienced what God has to offer, the living water, we need to tell other people, "Go ahead prime the pump, believe me it works"!

Doubt sees the obstacles; Faith sees the way.  
Doubt sees the darkest night; Faith sees the day.  
Doubt dreads to take a step; Faith soars on high.  
Doubt questions, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I!"

Faith in the purposes, promises and power of God;

#### 4. Faith in the Presence of God (9)

Jos 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

This verse would have been a great comfort to Joshua and the people. God told Joshua that He would be with them wherever they went. Joshua had the very presence of God as he marched through the Promised Land. We, as Christians, have that very same presence with us today. We have the presence of God in our lives given to us by Christ and described to us in the Word of God.

I heard the story of a guy from the states named Mark who was an Air Force officer. His wife Susan had been in a tragic accident that had left her blind. She was having a very difficult time accepting it. She was angry and frustrated and full of self-pity. After more than a year Susan was wanting to go back to work, but there was a problem. How would she get there? They did not have enough money for a taxi every day, and there would be times that Mark was deployed and not able to drive her. She would have to start taking the bus again, but she was afraid. How would she know when to get off? What happens if she got lost?

Mark promised that he would take the bus to and from work with her until she was comfortable enough to do it on her own. He taught her how to rely on her other senses, specifically her hearing, to determine where she was and how to adapt to her new environment. He helped her befriend the bus drivers who could watch out for her, and save her a seat. He made her laugh, even on those not-so-good days when things did not go as planned. Finally, Susan decided that she was ready to try the trip on her own. Monday morning arrived, and before she left, she threw her arms around Mark, and said good-bye. For the first time since the accident she ventured out on her own. Everything went according to plans. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday... Each day she felt better and more confident. She was proud of herself for doing it.

On Friday morning she got on the bus as usual. When she reached her stop she was getting ready to exit the bus when the bus driver said, "Boy, I sure envy you." Susan was not sure if he was talking to her but she said "what do you mean?" The driver said, "It must feel good to know how deeply you are loved." She was puzzled by the comment but then the driver continued, "Every morning I pull up to this stop and there is a fine looking man in a military uniform who is standing across the street waiting for you to get off the bus. He makes sure you cross the street safely and he watches until you enter your office building. Then he blows you a kiss, gives you a little salute and walks away. You are one lucky lady."

God watches over us in a similar way. We may not know He is present, we may not be able to see His face, but He is there nonetheless! God loves us and is with us, even when we do not necessarily see Him. He goes with us. Just as God was with Israel as they entered the promised land, God is with us now.

We can have faith in the purposes, promises, power and presence of God. Therefore, I want to encourage you as a church to be strong and courageous. Don't hold back. Go for it! Yes, you are going to be without a lead pastor for a few months, but that is no excuse not to continue moving forward. We have a clear direction, we have a mission. Keep moving forward.

I am inwardly fashioned for faith, not for fear. Fear is not my native land; faith is. I am so made that worry and anxiety are sand in the machinery of life; faith is the oil. I live better by faith and confidence than by fear, doubt and anxiety. In anxiety and worry, my being is gasping for breath -- these are not my native air. But in faith and confidence, I breathe freely -- these are my native air. A John Hopkins University doctor says, "We do not know why it is that worriers die sooner than the non-worriers, but that is a fact." But I, who am simple of mind, think I know; We are inwardly constructed in nerve and tissue, brain cell and soul, for faith and not for fear. God made us that way. To live by worry is to live against reality -- Dr. E. Stanley Jones

I grew up in Sarnia. As a kid we would sometimes go to the beach. When you are little, the beach can be a scary place. You do not know how deep the water gets or whether a big wave will hit you and knock you over. There are sharp rocks to avoid. You had to be careful at the beaches in Sarnia. However, occasionally we would drive up to Ipperwash beach, close to Grand Bend. The beach there is amazing. You can walk out forever and the water never went over your knees. The sandbar protects you from the waves and there are no rocks.