

Be Strong and of Good Courage – Deuteronomy 31:1-30

Introduction – This is an interesting situation for Moses and Joshua. They both know that Moses is going to die, that Joshua is going to lead the people victoriously into the Promised Land, and that Israel will eventually fall into apostasy. If it is all going to fail, what's the point? The whole story is a type of a greater Moses, a greater Joshua, a greater conquest, and a triumphant finish of Jesus Christ the Victor. And so, for many reasons, Joshua, and those with faith, are exhorted to “*be strong and of good courage*” (v6,7,23).

The Call of Joshua (vv1-8, 14-15) – Moses is one hundred and twenty years old and will not be able to lead them into the land. But the people are reminded that it was Yahweh who will lead them, Yahweh who will destroy their enemies, Yahweh who will go before them and will not leave them nor forsake them (vv1-6). The message is the same to the new leader, Joshua (vv7-8) who will himself need to be strong and of good courage. Wise leadership understands that there will be external *and* internal threats and Moses probably has both in mind.

In the commissioning of Joshua, we should see the typology coming to the fore (vv14-15). Joshua is the same name in Greek as Jesus (see Acts 7:45, Heb 4:8). Moses has promised that a greater Prophet than he will come and Joshua is a type of that greater Prophet, Jesus, who also was baptized by the previous leader and had a glory of sorts rest upon Him (Matt 3:13-17). “*The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” (John 1:17). Moses was a great servant in the house of God, but Jesus is over the house (Heb 3:1-6). Both Joshuas go and take the land.

The Law of Liberty (vv9-13) – Every year, all the males in Israel would have to go to the place God chose (Jerusalem) for the Feast of Tabernacles. But every seven years, in the year of release (Sabbath rest for the land) all of Israel was required to go and hear the law read “...*that they may learn to fear Yahweh your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear Yahweh your God as long as you live in the land...*” (vv12-13). Sabbath rest and the Law were to be joined together. Release and Law were to be proclaimed and enjoyed together. James calls the law, “*the law of liberty*” (James 1:25, 2:12). These feasts were to bring forth the life-giving, covenant-renewing, faith-building goodness of the law. And that is what the law is for those with faith. You cannot skip over the deliverance before the reception of the law.

In addition, see the power of corporate liturgy, coming together as a community and hearing together from God as His people. The rhythm of weeks, years, and generations, the cycle of planting and harvest and rest, the rituals that teach us over and over, reminding and strengthening our understanding of who we are and Who God is. This is not to simply take place in our own little corners, but in the power of community and corporate life.

But to the unbelieving heart, the law is a burden and we hate it. In His kindness, God uses His law like a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Gal 4:1-5), and then when we come to Christ, the law becomes a friend and not a foe. But the law doesn't change, only our hearts change.

The Coming Rejection and God's Sovereign Plans (vv 16-30) – Joshua is to be encouraged, but not because the people will be permanently faithful (vv16-18). The Lord instructs Moses to write a song which will be sung by the people as a testimony against them in the years and generations ahead when they fall away. It will prove that the fault was not with God, nor with the law, nor with the covenant, but with their rebellious and stiff-necks.

The same thing happens to this day – covenant members hear the warnings and apply it to someone else, thinking they cannot ruin their lives, their marriages, their children. They abuse the blessings of the Word, of the church, of the leaders, of their family, and bring curses down upon themselves.

But even the greater rejection that Israel had against Christ was planned by God and it brought about the salvation of the world (Acts 4:27-28). Israel stumbled and salvation came to the Gentiles (Rom 11:11), but the promise remains of Israel returning one day in fullness and an even greater blessing upon the world will follow (Rom 11:12).

The Fruit of the Greater Joshua (v23, Matt 28:18-20) – Typologies have layers and so, for instance, Jesus is the greater David, but He is also the Son of David, the greater Solomon. Here, we see that He is the greater Moses bringing the greater deliverance, but He is also the greater Joshua and the New Israel, commissioned to go and take the whole world where Israel (the new Israel) is promised again that “*lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”

The Law and Your Life – Does the law come to you and, by grace, is received as the release from debt? Or does it come and bring a burden of debt?

Strengthened in Faith – Be strong and of good courage. You have to remember where the story is going, and by faith you must apply it to your life as well.