

"FORWARD BOUND TOWARD THE NEW YEAR"
JOSHUA 3:1-17

INTRO: Here we are at the THRESHOLD of another NEW YEAR! As we look back over 2017 we can see the many ways God has been good to us and blessed us beyond what we deserve. **INDEED HE DESERVES ALL THE PRAISE WE CAN GIVE TO HIM! SO LET'S DO IT!** 2018 is about to meet us head on and we have NO IDEA WHAT IT IS GOING TO GIVE US WITHIN THE NEXT 365 DAYS! The Lord could come. Some of us will die. We all will face trials. We all will have disappointments. We all will experience blessings. **BUT WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT WE DO NOT KNOW ALL THAT THE NEW YEAR WILL BRING US.** Certainly the words of Joshua 3:4 in our text truly apply as we face the New Year, **"YE HAVE NOT PASSED THIS WAY HERETOFORE."** ONE THING WE DO KNOW is that **God will be with us to give us all the strength, wisdom and energy we need to do His will.** But in the process of our FORWARD BOUND MOTION INTO THE NEW YEAR there are certain realities we should keep before us if we desire to have a YEAR OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND VICTORY FOR THE LORD. Joshua 3:1-17 presents FOUR OF THOSE REALITIES FOR US TO CONSIDER. Let's consider them.

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BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT:

- 1) Moses had died after leading Israel through the wilderness for 40 years and Joshua had just been placed in command of Israel by God Himself - Chapter 1.
- 2) Joshua had sent two spies into the Promised Land who returned with a very positive report in saying: **"TRULY THE LORD HATH DELIVERED INTO OUR HANDS ALL THE LAND; FOR EVEN ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTRY DO FAINT BECAUSE OF US."** - Chapter 2.
- 3) Now Joshua was preparing Israel to cross the Jordan River and to possess the Promised Land. - Chapter 3
ISRAEL'S FORWARD BOUND JOURNEY REQUIRED THEM TO KEEP CERTAIN PRINCIPLES BEFORE THEM IN ORDER TO DO GOD'S WILL.

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I. FORWARD BOUND IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY - VSS. 1-4

"YE HAVE NOT PASSED THIS WAY HERETOFORE." - VS, 4

NOTE: IN GOING FORWARD IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY WE WOULD BE WISE TO KEEP CERTAIN PRINCIPLES BEFORE US.

- A. Go Forward with our Eyes on the Lord - Vs. 3a
"When ye see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord"
 1. The Ark of the Covenant represented God's Presence with the people.
 2. Going forward we MUST keep our eyes on the Lord.
- B. Go Forward with a Mind to Obey the Lord - Vs. 3b
"Remove from your place and Go After It."
 1. "Remove from your place" - **Set aside YOUR will.**
 2. "Go After it" - **Commit to God's will.**
- C. Go Forward with a Heart of Respect for the Lord - Vs. 4a
"Come not near unto it."
 1. The Ark of the Covenant was to be Respected as it represented God's presence.
 2. God and all He is must be respected if we are going to please Him.
- D. Go Forward with a Will to Follow the Lord - Vs. 4b
"That ye may know the way."
 1. Going our "own way" can lead to destruction.
 2. Going God's way will lead to blessing.
- E. Go Forward with a Walk of Faith in the Lord - Vs. 4c
"For ye have not passed this way heretofore."
 1. Uncharted territory brings unexpected circumstances.
 2. Uncharted territory requires total faith in God for His direction.

ILLUSTRATION:

II. FORWARD BOUND WITH A SANCTIFIED LIFE - VS. 5
"SANCTIFY YOURSELVES"

- A. Sanctify Yourselves Today - Vs. 5a
 1. There is a bit of a difference between the OT and the NT words for "SANCTIFY." Since we are in an OT text, let's consider the OT usage.

2. The OT word for "SANCTIFY" means to "SET APART UNTO GOD AS HOLY" and is used to stress the concept of BEING SET APART FROM THE COMMON WAY TO BE "ISOLATED FOR GOD'S SERVICE." WOW!

3. Every Christian should set himself from the world to be used for God and DO IT IMMEDIATELY!

B. See the Lord work tomorrow - Vs. 5b

-The decision to set ourselves apart for God's service TODAY will guarantee us seeing the "WONDERS OF GOD" TOMORROW! WOW!

ILLUSTRATION:

III. FORWARD BOUND WHILE FACING IMPOSSIBLE TASKS -VSS. 6-11

"YE SHALL STAND STILL IN JORDAN" - VS. 8

COMPARE: Exodus 14:13 when Israel faced the Red Sea.

QUESTIONS: WHY STAND STILL?

A. To see the Presence of God - Vs. 10a

"The Living God is Among You"

B. To see the Promise of God - Vs. 10b

"He Will without Fail"

C. To see the Provision of God - Vs. 10c

"Drive out from Before You."

ILLUSTRATION:

IV. FORWARD BOUND BY THE POWER OF GOD - VSS. 12-17

A. God's Power With a Dedicated and United Team - Vs. 12

"Take you 12 Men"

NOTE: WHEN A UNITED EFFORT TAKES PLACE BY GOD'S CHILDREN GOD'S POWER GOES TO WORK!

B. God's Power By a Step of Faith - Vs. 13

"As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests...the waters shall be cut off"

NOTE: WHEN AN ACT OF FAITH TAKES THE FIRST STEP THE POWER OF GOD GOES TO WORK!

C. God's Power Through an Act of Obedience - Vss. 14,15

1. The People Removed from their tents - Vs. 14a

-In following the spiritual leadership of the priests.

2. The Feet of the Priests bearing the Ark - Vss. 14b, 15

-In following the direction of the Lord through Joshua

TWO MILLION PEOPLE CROSSED THE JORDAN THAT WAS OVERFLOWING ITS BANKS IN THE TIME OF HARVEST! THAT IN AND OF ITSELF IS A MIRACLE THAT ONLY GOD COULD DO!

NOTE: OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL ALWAYS BRING GOD'S MIRACULOUS POWER AND WORK TO ACTION!

D. God's Power In Divine Action - Vss. 16,17

1. God stopped the waters in a heap from above 15 miles north of the crossing at the City of Adam.

2. God cut off the waters from running into the Dead Sea below.

3. God led the children of Israel through the bed of the Jordan River on DRY GROUND IMMEDIATELY...THAT WAS A MIRACLE IN ITSELF because the bed of the river would normally have been wet and muddy.

NOTE: UNTHINKABLE THINGS HAPPEN WHEN GOD'S POWER GOES TO WORK!

ILLUSTRATION:

APPLICATION/LESSON:

We have NO IDEA what 2018 will bring our way. Nor do we have the wisdom and strength to face it on our own. But by the grace and strength of God 2018 can be a year of blessing and victory for us if we SANCTIFY OURSELVES TO GOD FOR MINISTRY AND SERVICE. Doing so will enable us to SEE GOD DO WONDERS! Not doing so will cause us to miss out on a lot of the blessing and provision of God. WHAT WILL YOU DO TODAY?