

Pastor Paul Horn

The LORD Your God Will Be With You Wherever You Go

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.”

Let’s imagine for a moment that all of you are enlisted in the Army, Private First Class. It’s a day like today...after church you head back to the mess hall on Fort Knox, scarf down some chow, and then it’s back to the barracks to watch the Cards and Wildcats on ESPN with your buddies. During the game you hear a knock on the door. You assume it’s one of the soldiers from your unit and you say, “Come on in!” In struts General David Petraeus. All of you in the room immediately spring to attention. General Petraeus says, “At ease, soldiers.” He walks up to you and says, “Private, I am retiring as General. I have come here today to appoint you as my replacement. Good luck soldier.” To which you reply, “Sir, I think I need to use the latrine.”

The text this morning is from Joshua 1:6-9. The five verses preceding this section inform us that Moses, the LORD’s servant, had died. The LORD says to Joshua, “then, you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give you.” Unlike General Petraeus nominating you to take his place, Joshua had plenty of on the job training. Joshua had been Moses’ aid for 40years. He never left his side. Moses was a wonderful mentor. Joshua knew what he was getting into, for the most part. But this was new territory he was marching into. He was commissioned to lead 2million people into the land of Canaan, and then to completely annihilate the people living there so that Israel could claim the inheritance the LORD had promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That could have been frightening to Joshua, thinking about the bloody battlefields that waited for them. Joshua could have gotten discouraged, thinking back to Israel’s history or whining and complaining.

With each day of your life you are marching into new territory, heading into a point in your life that you have never been before. As a parent you are marching into a new territory of parenthood. Your children are reaching adolescence, when they are becoming more independent, maturing in their thinking. Maybe your kids are becoming teenagers and you’re not exactly how you’re going to deal with it. You’re marching toward retirement and you’re not sure how that will pan out for you. You look at your health right now and understand that your future looks frightening. As a congregation we are

marching into new territory. From October through December we are planning a pledge drive and hope to gain three year commitments totaling over \$250,000. That's more money than we've ever dealt with as a congregation. We're about to spend over \$800,000 on a new facility. That's a lot of money. This could be a frightening chapter in our lives.

We've talked about scary times in our lives, what about the discouraging situations? At your place of work there's this coworker...and no matter how hard you try, you just cannot get along with them. Or you have a supervisor that just doesn't like you and makes your job very frustrating. Maybe you struggle with finances at home. But you've done your homework. You've sat down and established a great budget, stopped splurging on the "unnecessaries", and even set aside a percentage to the LORD every week, and yet you're still tight on money. That's discouraging. Maybe you've noticed the past few weeks that we don't have very many unchurched people in worship, that can be frustrating and discouraging. Maybe you have a friend, or coworker or family member that you've been inviting to church forever, and they just won't come. You're concerned for their spiritual welfare and you know that more than anything, they need God's Word, they need to hear about Jesus, and they still won't come....that's discouraging.

You see, Satan will use these situations in your life to tear apart your relationship with your LORD. He will spout the same lies he uttered in the Garden of Eden, "Do you see how scary and discouraging your life is? God doesn't care for you! He only cares about himself. God is lying to you. He's not with you wherever you go!" And unfortunately there are too many times when we listen to Satan's lies.

But your God is the LORD. In the Hebrew language of Joshua 1, that's Yahweh, which means he's the God who makes promises and is faithful in keeping them, all of them. He made a promise to be with Joshua wherever he went. He gives you the same promise that he made to Joshua 3,400 years ago: I, the LORD your God, will be with you wherever you go. Therefore, be strong and very courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged." Notice that your Savior repeats his command three times, "Be strong! Be courageous!" He's saying to you, "Listen up! This is important! Pay attention!"

Joshua could look back on the past 40 years and see that the LORD had been with him. Think back on your life... the LORD has been with you since the beginning. Even when you were born into this world as wretched, completely corrupt sinful human being, an enemy of God, wanting nothing to do with him, condemned to suffer forever. And yet the LORD came to you and washed with the power of water and His Word. At your baptism he made a promise to you. At baptism he cleansed you from all your sins, even your sins of fear, frustration, and hopelessness. He rescued you from the power of death. Through your baptisms the Holy Spirit promised that he crucified you with Christ and has given you Christ's resurrection. Through baptism, you have the promise from your Savior that he will come for you and bring you out of your graves to live with him forever. Baptized into his name, Christ lives in you. That's why he can promise that he will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua could look to the future with confidence and know that the LORD would continue to keep his promise. You also...look to the future... your LORD Jesus promises to be with you. As you march into that new area of parenthood, be strong and courageous, your LORD will be with you. As you march into the new territory of retirement, or bad health, be strong and courageous, your LORD will be with you. As we march forward with our building project, we will not be terrified or frightened, the LORD will be with us. On Tuesday morning when you walk into work, and you know that you will have to confront that coworker or boss, don't be discouraged. For even in those situations, your LORD will be with you. When you are frustrated by finances and the lack of unchurched in our congregation, don't be discouraged. Look to the LORD. He is still with you. And as you continue to invite that coworker, friend or family member to church or Bible study, you will be strong and courageous as you do so, for the LORD is with you wherever you go.

It's highly unlikely that a general would nominate a private to take over his command. But your LORD marches you into new, unexplored territory everyday of your lives. No reason to be frightened, no reason to be discouraged. For the LORD your God promises you, "I will be with you wherever you go." My dear friends, you will be strong. You will be very courageous. I pray that the Holy Spirit grant it to you for Jesus' sake. Amen.