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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

Sometimes You’ve Just Got To Get Your Feet Wet

Just as God had led the people out of Egypt in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, God led the people through the wilderness wanderings through his presence enthroned above the Ark of the Covenant.

The cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the command of the Lord the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the Lord they could camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped... Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they set out (Numbers 9:16–23).

Obviously, this took a great deal of trust in the leadership of the Lord.

Finally, as the book of Joshua opens, the children of Israel drew near the border of Canaan, prepared to cross the Jordan River and conquer the land God promised. This would be one of the biggest leaps of faith they had taken so far in their journey, following God's leadership. Joshua communicated to the people God's directions for this crossing:

When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before (Josh. 3:3-4).

There will be certain junctures in life where we will face the nervousness of the unknown. Going to a new school, or moving away from home to a new city, deciding to get married, getting a new job, giving birth to a baby and beginning the challenges of parenthood, even making plans for retirement, require looking to God for direction and trusting His leadership. Like the children of Israel following the ark, those are times to step back and observe the leadership of the Lord, lest we strike out ahead and go the wrong way, or move too soon. When "you have not passed this way before," look to God's word for guidance. This will soothe our anxiety and guard our footsteps.

In fact, this is a good lesson to remember when we face life's ultimate unknown passage—the passage into death. A story is told of an old man who became ill and was taken to a hospice home. The family took in his dog, which had been his constant companion for several years. The dog spent many days moping, not eating, upset in his new surroundings and perplexed by the disappearance of his master. Eventually the man began to regain strength, and the family requested permission to bring the dog into the man's chamber for a visit, to cheer up the man a little bit as pets are known to do. As the dog was brought sulkily through the back door of the hospice home into yet another strange and scary place, they approached the man's room. Muffled sounds of the man's talking emanated from behind the door. And the dog instantly perked up, and

began dancing and wagging his tail excitedly for the first time in a week. He was still in a strange and dangerous environment, full of sounds and sights and smells that assaulted his nervous senses. But he knew that his master was behind that door, and so he was ready and eager to go in! Thus, the Christian can look forward to being with Jesus.

We must follow God with that kind of eager trust. "Where he leads I'll follow." In our lives, God must be in front. He's not asking us to do anything that He Himself has not already done through His Son; and he's not asking us to accomplish anything that He Himself does not give us the power to face. If God leads us down a path, no matter how difficult it looks, God will be walking there with us.

But now, notice something else interesting about the trust that God wanted His people to demonstrate. The people of Israel had assembled in battle array to cross the Jordan River and begin the conquest of Canaan. But the Jordan River in this place is often impassible. Even in the dry season, it can be 100 yards wide and 10 feet deep in places. Imagine swimming that with armor and weapons and tents and food and equipment. But at this time of year, (Josh. 4:19) the early springtime, it would be the heart of the rainy season. Then, the Jordan River by Jericho overflows its banks and becomes over a mile wide with a deep and strong current! And yet God commanded them to prepare for crossing, and even for the priests to walk into the water.

"When you [priests carrying the ark] come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan... Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan... It shall come about that when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above shall stand in one heap" (Josh. 3:8-13).

It would have been nice for God to start the process early and bolster their faith. But no, God wanted them to enter the Jordan, to get their feet wet, promising to provide at the right time. And He did!

The waters that were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward [the Salt Sea] were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan which all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan (3:15–17).

Now, Adam and Zarethan are about 20 miles upstream. There, the Jordan River is in a deeper gorge. Very rarely, the swift current will undercut a section of the bank which collapses into the River and dams it up for a time, until the waters can build up and wash over the top, finally breaking through and eroding the dam. This happened in recent history, when a 1927 earthquake caused a landslide that blocked the Jordan for 21 hours.

Even if God used natural means, it was still a great miracle of timing for Him to cause the blockage that would not be felt 20 miles downstream for many hours. And yet just as the priests' feet got wet, the waters dried up on cue. They advanced to the center of the River, braving what flash flood might come rumbling down the river, waiting for the people to cross. The moment the priests exited the riverbed, the Jordan returned to its flow (4:18), an event memorialized forever (20).

When God commands us, our hesitancy and anxiety must give way to obedience. Sometimes you have to get your feet wet in the endeavor before God will reveal His methods of provision, which He had planned all along, and maybe even had already set in motion; and before He will show the blessings of obedience.

—*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

“The cords of sin get stronger the more we sin, yet sin deceives us into thinking we can quit sinning whenever we please. As the invisible chains of habit are forged, we discover that we lack the strength to break them. Only Jesus can set us free.”

—*Warren Wiersbe*