

Joshua Chapter 1 v 1 - 5

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[0 : 0 0] Come to our faithful and everlasting God in prayer. Let's seek his face together as we pray. Oh, how amazing it is to us, oh Lord our God, that though we live in a world which is constantly changing, Lord, we are sure and certain that you are the God who does not change.

You are the God who remains faithfully the same. Lord, we are here in a new year, 2015. Lord, we have been through the year past and we do not know what the year holds for us.

But we thank you and we rejoice in the fact that you, oh Lord, have always been the same. Not that you are old-fashioned or out of date, Lord, but we thank you that you are contemporary.

We thank you, oh Lord, that you are always ahead of time, never behind. We thank you that you are the God who amazingly lives outside of time. We are conditioned and we are shaped and we are fashioned and we are restricted by the time, the present in which we live.

But you are the God who has no such restrictions. You are the God who knows the end from the beginning, the God who sees and understands all things. What tomorrow will bring is a mystery to us, but not to you.

[1 : 1 9] And so, Lord, we come again and renew our faith and our trust and our hope in you and say again, Lord, how grateful we are that you are our God, that our God and our help, yes, in the past year, but Lord, and our hope for the years to come.

Lord, we ask that you would help us this morning, that we would again be able to renew our trust in you, where our faith has staggered or slipped, where our hope for the future is jaded, where we are filled maybe with fears or apprehensions.

Grant us again, oh Lord, that assurance that if we put our hope and trust in you, you will never fail us nor let us down. For you are the God who cannot change, cannot fail, cannot let us down.

Lord, we ask that again, as we meet together, as your people, as one people, one body, those who have been united to you in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, those who belong to one another because we belong to Jesus Christ.

Grant us that sense of unity, we pray, that we may, Lord, share together in the wonderful life of this local church, that we may be bound together with more than just the work of your Holy Spirit in our hearts, but with the love of Christ in our hearts for you and for one another, that love that permeates and overflows, Lord, our lives, to the lives of those that we meet in this town and community, that in this coming year, oh Lord, we may be pleased to see others coming into the family of God, others coming in to know the joy of sins forgiven, others coming in to trust in Jesus as their Saviour.

[3 : 1 1] Oh Lord, help us then and meet with us then. Bless this time to us now, for we ask it in the name of your dear son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Amen. Children, we'll just stay in for a moment while we turn to God's Word. Good. And we're going to turn to Deuteronomy and chapter 34.

Deuteronomy and chapter 34, which is the last chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. And we're going to read that chapter and then we're going to go straight over the page into Joshua and chapter 1, verses 1 to 5.

Okay, so Deuteronomy chapter 34, reading the chapter and then into Joshua 1, because it's Joshua 1 particularly that I want us to concentrate on this morning and this evening, because this is New Year and it's good for us to stop, to pause, to think in a different way perhaps than we would do each week.

And so we're going to look at Joshua 1 particularly this morning and this evening. And I hope that you're able to join us this evening as well as we continue to apply and to understand God's Word for today, which of course we know that it is for that very purpose.

[4 : 39] So Deuteronomy 34, beginning at verse 1, reading through into Joshua chapter 1, verse 5. Now then, Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho.

There the Lord showed him the whole land from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negev and the whole region from the valley of Jericho, the city of Palms, as far as Zoar.

Then the Lord said to him, this is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, I will give it to your descendants. I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross over into it.

And Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor. But to this day, no one knows where his grave is.

Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak, nor his strength gone. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab 30 days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

[5 : 57] Now Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses.

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land.

For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. Over the page, Joshua 1 verse 1. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I'm about to give to you, to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, from the great river of the Euphrates, all the Hittite country, to the great sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life, as I was with Moses.

[7 : 14] So I will be with you. I will never leave you, nor forsake you. We thank God for his faithful word. Well, have Joshua chapter 1 open, please, in your Bibles, as that will be a help to you, as we particularly consider that portion.

Well, yes, it is 2015. Another milestone has been passed, hasn't it? Those events in our lives, which signal change is happening.

And for all of us, whoever who we are, there is a sense of foreboding. What will 2015 bring? What will happen in our work situation, or our home situation?

What will happen with that relative or friend? What will happen in the life of the church? And we open our new diaries, and we put up our new calendars, and we begin to remind ourselves, though we don't write checks very often, but when we write letters or whatever, to remember to put 2015, and not 2014, or as I often do, 1990-something even still.

But in reality, of course, nothing has changed. In reality, of course, we're still the same people we were last year, just a few days ago. We still live in the same houses.

[8 : 41] We still go around the same daily business. We still are involved in the lives of the same people. But in our minds, a new beginning has come.

We've entered a new stage, and we've left behind, to a certain degree, what was familiar. We've left behind what we knew, for what we do not know.

And for us, that can be somewhat daunting. What is coming? Now here, at the beginning of Joshua, chapter 1, we have Joshua, and God's people, the Israelites, standing ready to cross the River Jordan.

It wasn't a great and amazing thing to do, to cross a river. Probably some of us crossed the river desk, even this morning. It's no great milestone in one sense, but for them, the crossing of this river was the beginning of a totally new phase in their lives.

Verse 2, Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I'm about to give to you. They were entering the promised land at last, 40 years after many of them had left Egypt.

[10 : 00] 40 years during which they had spent their time living in tents, wandering through the wilderness of, sort of Saudi Arabia, living each day on the manner that God provided.

Led each day by the pillar of cloud, the symbol of God's presence. Warmed each night by the pillar of fire, the symbol of God's care and protection.

But now they were going into the promised land. There were new challenges for them, as well as new opportunities to face. And into the life of Joshua, particularly, but also into the life of God's people, the Lord speaks.

The Lord said to Joshua, verse 1, God is the God who speaks into the situations of life. And the words that He speaks to them, because they are God's word to His people, are God's words to us, and they speak to us.

As we go forward into a new year, as we go forward, as it were, crossing into the unknown. And they are words which give us hope, and they are words which encourage us to go with confidence and without fear.

[11 : 18] But the very first thing that the Lord says to Moses, sorry, says to Joshua particularly, and to God's people, seems rather odd. In fact, we might even say it seems rather insensitive.

For the very first thing that God says to Joshua and to the people is this, Moses, my servant, is dead. Strange thing, isn't it?

First thing He says to them is, Moses, my servant, is dead. Why would He say such a thing? Why would He remind them of something which they knew only too well? If you remember, we just read, didn't we, the end of chapter 34 in Deuteronomy, where Moses dies, and for 30 days, the people mourn His passing.

And so they've had 30 days, a whole month, where they've been remembering Moses is dead, and thinking about it, and contemplating it. And so it's no new revelation, it's nothing new that God is saying to them, it's not some great, new word of encouragement and help.

In fact, to begin with, it seems rather unhelpful, we might think. Moses, my servant, is dead. So why does God say it? Well, I believe that God says to Joshua and to the people this truth that Moses is dead because God knows how hard it is to let go of the past.

[12 : 41] God knows how hard it is to let go of the past. For 40 years, Moses had exerted the most powerful influence over the lives of Joshua and the people.

More influence than anybody else. That's why we're told at the end of Deuteronomy 34, since then, no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses.

Moses is dead. The Moses who brought them out of Egypt. The Moses who brought down those plagues, those 10 plagues upon the people of Egypt and Pharaoh.

Moses, the one who led them through the divided Red Sea so that their feet didn't get wet and brought the Red Sea crashing down upon their enemies. Moses who provided them water from the rock in the wilderness when they were thirsty and bread from heaven when they were hungry.

Moses who gave them all the laws of God and instructed them about the construction of the tabernacle and how to worship and enjoy the fellowship of God. Moses who, when he enjoyed God's presence, had a face that shone so brightly a veil had to be put across it.

[13 : 51] This Moses who had always been there for the people was now no more. But a long, long shadow was cast over them by his passing.

It seems unimaginable now for them to be able to go on without Moses. In fact, it may well have been that within their hearts and lives they thought we can't go into the promised land.

We can't go into this new place without Moses. Forty years ago our fathers and our grandfathers and grandparents, they wouldn't go in even when they had Moses.

They were so scared of the giants in the land. How can we possibly go in now that Moses is gone? The Lord begins and speaks to Joshua and speaks to the people and reminds them and says, Moses, my servant is dead.

Now get ready to go. Moses, my servant is dead. Now get ready to go. See, God knows only too well how the past can hold us back from moving forward.

[14 : 58] One of the greatest hindrances we have is the past. Our past sins, our past failures, our past sadnesses, even our past successes can be a burden and a barrier to us moving forward from where we are now.

I wonder if that's how you feel about 2014 or the years before that. I don't know if, I don't, can't go forward with confidence.

I can't go forward with hope. I can't go forward into the new year because of all that I've experienced in the past.

in one sense, I'm sure that there's that feeling by Joshua and the people here that if only Moses was with us, we could go forward.

If only Moses was here, everything would be alright. And again, we feel like that as well. If only we could turn the clock back.

[16 : 17] If only we could undo that thing that happened in the past. If only we could have not made that stupid mistake. If only we had not fallen into that foolish sin.

If only I could go back and undo what's been done. Or even perhaps for some of us as we get that bit older we begin to think, if only the days in the future were like the days in the past.

When I was young, those halcyon days, those golden days, when Moses was there with us, when we weren't afraid, perhaps we long for the past and that's what holds us back from the future.

Now notice that God does not say to Joshua and the people, Moses, my servant, is dead, now forget about him.

Doesn't say that, does he? God knows that we can't forget the past. God knows that we shouldn't forget the past.

[17 : 35] If we forget the past and we won't learn from it and we will be forced in one sense to repeat the mistakes of the past. Moses may be dead, but of course Moses still continues to be mentioned by the Lord and is spoken of all the way through the Bible.

It's not that he's forgotten. But what God is saying here, surely, and what he says to us, surely is this, yes, Moses, my servant, is dead, but God, his master, is not dead.

The Lord is alive and well. The one who led Moses, the one who is greater than Moses, is the one who is here now.

Now, get ready and go. The God who was with you and brought you through that past, the God who forgave your sins and failures in the past, the God who sustained you and blessed you in the past, is the same today.

Don't look to the past, but look to the God of the past, the present, and the future. The Lord, Moses, my servant, is dead.

[19 : 00] Now then, get ready to go forward. Is it time, dear friends, for us to let go of the past? Is it time for us to forgive ourselves the past?

Certainly, God has forgiven us the past. His word assures us and promises us that again and again. Is it time that we forgive somebody something that happened in the past?

Still holding on to it? That grudge is still there, but it's become a little bit deeper and more rooted. It's become perhaps a bit bitter.

Isn't it time that we said to ourselves, Moses is dead. What's past is past. past? Isn't it time as well, dear friends, that we stop living in the past or on our past glories and successes?

Well, yes, of course, in the past I could do this and I did that, and in the past I knew this blessing and that blessing, but isn't it time we moved on and let the past be the past?

[20 : 19] Well, in 1963, what a wonderful year it was. What a year of God's blessing. But this is 2015. Don't just live on the blessings of the past.

Don't live on the things that once were. Don't keep going back in your mind. The God of the blessings of the past is the God of the blessings of today and of the future.

Moses, my servant is dead. Yes, he died, but perhaps he needed to die in Joshua's mind as well. And those things that are past in your life and mine, dear friends, they are past, but perhaps we haven't let them die.

We haven't let them go. They're still there. And yes, we need to remember them and not saying that we must forget them, but we need to let them go. that the Lord might take us forward, that the Lord might lead us into the things that he has for us ahead.

And we can go forward and we can go on with faith and confidence. Why? Because not only does God say to Joshua, Moses my servant is dead, but he also says this, verse three, I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

[21 : 46] your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, from the great river, the Euphrates, or the Hittite country, to great sea on the west. God is the God not only who tells us to let go of the past, but God is the God who's already determined the future.

He's determined where we shall go in the days ahead. They hadn't even crossed the river yet, they hadn't even placed a foot on the soil of Canaan, but God says, this is going to be yours, and that's going to be yours from here to there, and there to here.

God had determined where they would go. The land was unknown to them, but it was not unknown to God. The future is unknown to you, but it is not unknown to God.

And God says to Joshua and the people, wherever you go, that's my gift to you. Wherever you set your foot, I will give to you.

Don't you realize, don't I realize, dear friends, that every day that we have from God in the coming year is a gift from him to us. Every day that you set your foot out the front door, God is giving you a gift.

[23 : 01] He's giving you a new day, a new opportunity, a new blessing. Yes, a new challenge as well, I'm sure. See, the future holds no surprises for God.

There's nothing hidden around the corner from him. Every day he knows what we will face. Every day he knows what we shall enjoy. He knows what blessing is to be had.

Every day is an opportunity for him to be glorified in our lives. And God has set the wonderful limits for our lives as well. He sets out the boundaries, doesn't he, of the land.

He says, from the desert to Lebanon, from the great river to the great sea, everywhere, I've set you a limit. I've set you the boundaries of your life.

And for us, dear friends, God has set the boundaries for the year ahead. He knows where we shall go to and where we shall stop. The Bible makes it so clear and plain, something which we find almost impossible to comprehend, but is certainly wonderfully true, is that all our days, all of our lives are under the eye of God even before they've come into being.

[24 : 16] Here's the psalmist, Psalm 139, all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. The Lord has mapped the land out.

2015 is set before him, just as you and I might stand on the peaks and look down over the valley. Nothing is hidden. He sees all that's going to happen, not just the number of our days, but he sees also the temptations we will face.

He sees the trials. He sees the joys. He sees the delights. And because God sets the boundaries of your life and mine, the wonderful thing is that he shall never press us and push us beyond the limits of our boundaries.

Even when we feel that we are pushed close to the edge, God will not allow us to go over the boundary line. Here's Paul writing in 1 Corinthians and he says, no temptation has seized you except what is common to man.

God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. everything that is coming our way in 2015 is within the circumference, as it were, of the goodness and the sovereignty and the grace of our God.

[25 : 46] And wonderfully, more than that, everything that happens to us and everything that we face, we can rest in the assurance, comes to us because of the promises of God.

Here's, again, God speaking to Joshua. Get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I'm about to give to you, to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot as I promised Moses.

Moses is dead, but the promises of God cannot die, and did not die with him. The past is gone, but we can rely upon God's perfect promises for the future.

Everything is within his care, everything within his boundaries, everything that is given to us each day is a gift from himself, but more than that, we have the promises of God that he will supply and meet our needs, whatever we face and wherever we go.

Because he knows where we are going to, he knows what we need for the journey. Because he knows where the limits of our lives are, he knows the resources that we shall depend upon, and he promises to give them.

[27 : 07] Philippians 4.19, My God shall supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ. Promises of God are yours and mine in Christ, and they are everything to us.

And because of that, it means also that we shall not need to fear the enemies that we face. Notice how God speaks to Joshua in verse 5, no one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life.

He means by that that people will stand up against you, but they will fail to overcome you. You will have opposition, you will have battles, and indeed that's exactly what they did have, didn't they?

Jericho and I, and many other places as well. It was a battle that they went into when they crossed that river into the promised land. They were enemies.

Dear friends, you and I have enemies as Christians, the world, the flesh, and the devil. They are always there, and we will come under attack, and we will come under assault.

[28 : 21] Satan, our enemy, is active and real. Do not think because it's a new year that he's going to let us off easy. You and I are in a spiritual battle, and we've got to keep reminding ourselves of that, that as we go into the new year, we are going into fights.

Here's Ephesians 6, put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

You and I must and will face battles, just as Joshua and God's people went into the new land and faced battles. But the promise of God is this, that in all of these things, in all the battles we face, in all the assaults of the enemy, with the world, with all its hostility, who knows what the world will do in 2015?

Who knows what our government will do, which is anti-Christian, which will make it more difficult for us to follow the Lord? Who knows what will about our own hearts? We hope, of course, 2015, that we will be more holy and more godly, more Christ-like, but we know our own hearts.

We know the sinful nature that is there. We know the battle that we shall have with it. They will continue to war against us and seek to drag us away from the Lord, but in all these things, God has promised us no one will be able to stand up against you.

[29 : 56] Yes, we're to be on our guard. Yes, we're not to trust in our own strength. But, dear friends, we are certain and sure that God has promised that he will be all that we need.

Here's Paul as he writes to the Christians in Rome, Romans in chapter 8, for this time, verses 38 and following. He says, In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I'm convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons nor powers present or future height nor depth or anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The victory is assured. God has already won the battle in one sense. We are to walk in the victory that he provides.

Now, all these things that we've said, these things about the past and what we've said about the future and we've said about God's sovereign care and the boundaries and the victories, how can we be sure these things will take place?

[31 : 13] Are we just resting upon the promises of God? Yes, we are, but more than that, we have something again which gives us confidence and it's in that final verse five. It's the unchanging and abiding presence of God himself.

as I was with Moses. He started off with Moses my servant is dead, but closes with as I was with Moses so I will be with you.

I will never leave you nor forsake you. How could Moses do what he did? This great Moses of the past, how could he have overcome Pharaoh and all of his armies?

How could he have parted the Red Sea? How could he have brought water from the rock and manna from heaven? Was it by his own power? Was it because Moses was such an amazing man? No, it wasn't.

It was because Moses God was such an amazing God. He only did it because God was with him. And those successes of the past, those blessings of yesteryear, those things only took place and were only because God was with you.

[32 : 27] And he is with you still. How is it that you and I managed to get through 2014? How is it possible that here we are at the outbreak of 2015 and by God's grace we are still walking with him?

How is it possible that we did not fall away into sin and fall away from Christ? How is it possible that we have been able to continue in spite of our ups and downs, our failures and our mistakes, to still be living for Christ?

It wasn't by your faith, dear friend, or your strength, or mine, or your godliness, but it was by God's grace alone. It's because the Lord was with you in 2014 and with me.

It's because as he was with Moses, he was with us. And so how can we face the coming months ahead? How can we face the challenges of the year ahead? How can we cope with all the battles and the trials and the temptations and the assaults?

How can we do it? We can't, but with God we can. As we've been thinking even over Christmas, the words of Gabriel to Mary, with God all things are possible.

[33 : 41] and because we have this two-edged promise as we close this morning, this two-edged promise of what God says to us, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Never leave you. In other words, God is with us. We will never be destitute of the presence of God. When we feel it, when we will do, as we surely shall do, feel ourselves to be separate from the Lord, when we feel ourselves on our own, when we feel ourselves facing all sorts of fears and anxieties, and we cry out, God, where are you?

The truth is that he will reply through his word and his promises, I've never left you. Because the Holy Spirit of God himself dwells within us.

He is the comforter, the helper, the counselor that Jesus promised his disciples and to all who put their faith in him, in John. And so we can say, we know for certain, Jesus says, the Spirit of truth, you know him for he lives with you and he will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. That's Jesus fulfilling that final promise to his disciples, lo, I'm with you always, even to the very end of the age.

[35 : 02] How could Jesus be with us? How could God never leave us? Because God by his Spirit indwells us. Where you go, he goes. Where you are, he is. You are never alone.

And you can never be alone. As I was with Moses, I will be with you. We're told, weren't we, in Deuteronomy that Moses was someone who knew the Lord face to face.

As I was with Moses, I will be with you. Moses spoke in a personal way with the Lord and the Lord spoke with him. And so it would be Joshua's experience and so it will be our experience and is our experience.

I'll never leave you. leave you. what about when I sin, Lord? I'll never leave you.

But what about when I make such a mistake and foul it all up? I'll never leave you. What about when I'm forgetful of prayer? I'll never leave you.

[36 : 11] But what about I'll never leave you? It doesn't matter what you want to put on the what about list. I'll never leave you.

And to compound that promise, nor forsake you. When somebody's forsaken, it means not just a sense of being alone, doesn't it?

It means that they're bereft of any help. It means that they have no nowhere to turn. They've got no one to support them. They've got no one to provide for them. This is what God is saying.

Not only will I never leave you physically or spiritually in the sense of my presence will go with you, but I'll never forsake you in the sense of providing for you care and help in every circumstance.

I will give you assistance in every circumstance. That wonderful promise is repeated, isn't it, in Hebrews 4.16. Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.

[37 : 07] Our Savior God will never desert us, but surely, certainly will come to our aid quickly. Hebrews 4.16 reminds us, of course, of the Lord Jesus Christ who was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.

That's the promise. And so therefore, we're told, let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need, because Christ has experienced and lived this life and gone and now sits at the Father's right hand, so he shall never forsake us.

Do you need grace? Then grace is given. Do you need help? Then help is on tap. It's when I've lost my job, I'll never forsake you.

But I'm in hospital and my health is deteriorating, I'll never forsake you. But I'm old and the body's not doing the things that it should do, I'll never forsake you. You see, we are going into the changeable world of 2015, but we are going carried by the unchangeable God.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so we go with him and him with us.

[38 : 45] Let's just take a moment or two in the quietness of our hearts to respond to the word of God this morning. Let's come with thankfulness, perhaps coming to put to death some of our Moseses, perhaps coming again to reassure ourselves of our faith in him.

Thank you.