

Joshua Chapter 1 v 1 - 9

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Please, would you open your Bibles to Joshua chapter 1. I'm going to read the first nine verses. Joshua and chapter 1, beginning at verse 1.

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' servant, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now then, you and all these people get ready to cross the river Jordan 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, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give to them. Be strong and very courageous.

[1 : 13] 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. Keep this book of the law always on your lips.

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. Have I not commanded you?

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Richard Vermeer was a Romanian pastor who spent 15 years in a communist prison between 1948 and 1964.

At one jail he was placed in solitary confinement for three years. He was badly tortured throughout his incarceration. Yet in his biography he writes about what happened to him while alone in his cell.

[2 : 13] In solitary confinement we could not pray anymore as before. We were unimaginably hungry. We were as weak as skeletons.

The Lord's prayer was much too long for us. We could not concentrate enough to say it. My only prayer repeated again and again was, Jesus, I love you.

And then one glorious day I got the answer from Jesus. You love me? Now I will show you how I love you. At once I felt a flame in my heart which burned like the coronal streamers of the sun.

The disciples on the way from Emmaus said that their hearts burned when Jesus spoke with them. So it was with me. I knew the love of the one who gave his life on the cross for us all.

At present we're in lockdown in the UK. Perhaps more than ever we have a very tiny taste of what it must be like to be a Christian in a closed country where it is impossible to meet with brothers and sisters in fellowship, prayer, worship and around the world.

[3 : 29] For those of us who are forbidden to leave our homes or who are self-isolating. It can be a very lonely experience. Yet, as with Richard Wurmbrand, it may be that in our solitude we will experience the very real presence and nearness of the Lord Jesus Christ at this time.

The final words of Jesus that Matthew records in his Gospel are these And surely I am with you always even to the very end of the age.

This promise is Jesus' personal guarantee His personal guarantee to keep God's promise A promise that goes throughout the whole of the Bible We find that all those who have faith and trust in the Lord are given the same assurance contained in His oath I will never leave you nor forsake you This promise was so much more than words For each believer knew, felt and experienced God with them in the most lonely of times Abraham As he left his home and family in Ur and obeyed God's command to go to somewhere unknown Joseph sold as a slave and eventually imprisoned Gideon leading 300 men into battle against 135,000 Solomon the young king who took the place of his father that great king David

And the list goes on again and again Daniel in the pit of lions Jonah in the belly of the great fish This morning I want to pick up just on three examples of people who knew the Lord's promise I am with you and experienced that and knew that for themselves so that you might be encouraged we might be encouraged to believe the promise that Jesus has given us but also to experience the presence of the Lord Jesus whatever and wherever our solitude is the first one is Joshua and we read about him here in Joshua chapter 1 particularly verse 5 the Lord speaks with him and says to him as I was with Moses so I will be with you I will never leave you nor forsake you why did Joshua need the assurance of the Lord's presence not only because he had a daunting task set before him to lead the people of God into the new promised land and to conquer that land with many battles many conflicts but I think particularly because he no longer had the presence of Moses with him remember we read there in verse 2

Moses my servant is dead now then you and all these people get ready to cross for 40 years Moses had been there for Joshua he had guided him supported him encouraged him taught him but now Joshua is all alone they say that it's lonely at the top Joshua must have felt that some of us will be lonely because someone who we loved someone who we spend a great deal of time with is no longer there for us and all that we wish that they were there for us all that we wish they were still with us but they're not for one reason or another yet to the lonely those of you who have no one with you at this moment as perhaps you did before Jesus says to you I am with you therefore you're not on your own you're not alone he is with you really truly genuinely always so talk to him share with him pour out your heart to him get out his love letter the bible and read what he's written to you listen for his voice and you'll find him speaking to you secondly there is the prophet

[7 : 58] Jeremiah Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter 1 verses 4 to 8 we read this the word of the Lord came to me that's Jeremiah saying before I formed you in the womb I knew you before you were born I set you apart I appointed you as a prophet to the nations alas sovereign Lord I said I do not have to speak I'm too young for the Lord said to me do not say I am too young you must go to everyone I send you and say whatever I command you do not be afraid of them for I am with you and will rescue you declares the Lord Jeremiah too was facing a daunting seemingly impossible challenge he was to take God's truth to a very wicked people a people who didn't want to hear what he had to say he would be a lone voice speaking to those who not only wouldn't hear but took exception to what he said he faced all sorts of opposition even at one time he was thrown into a well no one was there for him yet the Lord was he even repeated this promise to Jeremiah later on in chapter 15

I am with you and will rescue you declares the Lord like Joshua Jeremiah was not alone there were thousands if not millions of people around about he wasn't physically alone but he was certainly spiritually alone you may be in a family where you are the only Christian you are the only believer you have got your spouse maybe parents children in the house with you but you can't pray with them you can't read scripture with them you can't enjoy fellowship with them and share what the Lord has been doing in your life and you feel alone but you're not alone Jesus is with you again really genuinely truly all day long whatever you're doing and whoever is in the room with you therefore keep up your communication and fellowship with Jesus not necessarily audibly but silently from your heart keep sending up your thanks your requests your worship to him in your prayers in your mind perhaps it was especially written for you that Jesus spoke as he did when he says go into your room and close the door and pray that can be a real room you don't need to find space for yourself to do that or in the garden where you can talk with the Lord but it may just be the room of your mind the room of your heart because you're not alone finally the person I want us to think about is the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 18 we read about how the Lord gave to Paul that same promise that he gave to

Jeremiah and Joshua and many other of his people Acts 18 verses 9 and 10 one night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision do not be afraid keep on speaking do not be silent for I am with you and no one is going to attack you and harm you because I have many people in this city often when we read the life of Paul we might come to the conclusion and think that Paul was some sort of super Christian that he was someone who was way above us ordinary believers he didn't have the same fears or struggles or difficulties or temptations or problems he was full of courage and bravery he was a mighty Christian not like us weak ordinary Christians yeah that's wrong that's completely wrong because here Jesus speaks to Paul and he says to him do not be afraid why would he say that except that Paul clearly was afraid and knew fear the Lord Jesus knows his mind and heart as he knows your mind and heart as well he knew his fears and he knew that he felt alone just as he knows you feel alone like Joshua like Jeremiah

Paul also experienced fear I think there are many of us who are afraid at this time this crisis has produced a great fear over our country and in fact over the world men and women are afraid afraid to leave their homes afraid to speak and make contact but most of all of course many of us are afraid of death many thousands of people have died from COVID-19 that's the strain of the coronavirus and many more will yet die that seems almost definite perhaps you're afraid that you might be one of those who will die for the first time perhaps your mortality the reality that this life is not all there is is pressing in on you people are dying what about if I die what about if I gain what's going to happen to me what can this promise

I am with you what can this promise do to take away fear you see this promise is the only assurance sorry this promise is not the only assurance that we are alone I'll start again this promise is not only the assurance that we are not alone but also that we have with us the only person who can save us from death Jesus who died and rose again is with you he's already overcome death itself there's no one better to be with you as you face the threat of death instead of living with fear live with Christ his presence drives away all fear for those who've come to him and put their faith in him if you trust in him he'll save you if you turn from your fear and your sin his promise will become a reality in your life his presence will be felt by you and experienced by you no matter how alone you may feel no matter where you are here is the promise that Jesus gave to his disciples disciples that were themselves afraid disciples that were afraid of losing Jesus and being separated from him

[15 : 16] John in chapter 14 he tells them this these are his words to us as well I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you before long the world will not see me anymore but you will see me because I live you also will live on that day you will realize that I am in my father and you are in me and I am in you whoever has my commands and obeys them he is the one who loves me he who loves me will be loved by my father and I too will love him and show myself to them let's pray together thank you Lord Jesus that your words are words of truth and words of power they are not simply a sincere desire they are not simply a good wish but when you say to us

I am with you always to the very end of the age then you are with us always to the very end of the age Lord we may not feel it always we may struggle and doubt at times but Lord I pray that for each one who listens and each one who turns to you and calls upon you just as Richard Wurmbrand did in that terrible prison Lord may they know you coming to them and meeting with them and speaking with them and comforting them thank you that your love drives out all fear and we know it is because of your love for us that you'll never give up on us or forsake us or leave us help us again we pray day by day to walk with us protect us strengthen us thank you that you will never turn anyone away so I do pray for those who are afraid of death those who are afraid of what coronavirus might do to them

I pray Lord that they might put their hand in your hand and by faith trust you as the death conquering saviour so that one day they might be not only in your presence but with you in eternity oh Lord continue to save continue to meet with continue to show yourself to men and women of our generation fulfill your promise to us as we know you shall amen please keep praying for one another please keep phoning one another please keep loving one another going to sing now that wonderful hymn in Christ alone my hope is found amen