

Roadmap to Rest – Part 1 – Joshua 1:10-18

Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis

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I. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed the path picture with words hanging on the wall as you enter the sanctuary? The picture is of a simple, uphill path in the woods surrounded by the warm colors of fall and the peace and quiet of a place far away from the busy-ness and noise and constant activity you would find in town. I like to think of it as the path to rest. If you've ever paused for a moment and focused on the words written over the picture, you'll remember the important message it has for us...a message providing us with life-changing wisdom given thousands of years ago from the very mouth of God and pointing us to seek out and follow the only roadmap to rest that will actually lead us there and allow us to experience quietness and rest even when life around us is anything but restful.

The words on the picture come from the Bible and are found in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 6, verse 16. Hear the message the Lord has for you and I today:

***Thus says the Lord,
"Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths,
Where the good way is, and walk in it;
And you will find rest for your souls.***

Do you want to find rest for your soul today?...a rest that continues even in hard times and in the middle of diligent activity? Well, the Lord doesn't point us to the latest scientific research or the most recent developments of psychology or latest self-help book. Instead, as we look for rest, he tells us to look diligently and actively back in time to find the ancient paths. It's only there that we'll find the good way, the good path that will lead us to true and lasting rest for our souls.

And notice from this verse that it takes a patient, diligent looking and asking and seeking to find the ancient paths and discover the good way. We're told to stand by the ways and see and ask. We don't just take a cursory glance and then move on. We stand and observe and ask questions. And when we do find the good way

found on the ancient paths, it's not enough to just find it and know where it is. We need to start heading down the paths, following them and walking on them. We won't ever find rest for our souls if we're not following the paths and letting them guide us.

Well, today, we're going to get on those ancient paths, where the good way is. We're going to examine the paths together, the ancient paths of the Holy Scriptures, and find out where and how they tell us to walk so that we can find true and lasting rest for our souls. Turn with me in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Joshua, chapter 1, verses 10 through 18, where we'll discover what I'd like to call Joshua's roadmap to rest.

If you'll remember from our study last week, Joshua has just assumed leadership of the Israelites, called by the Lord to function as his servant and be strong and courageous in leading his people to finally take possession of the promised land. The Lord has just finished speaking directly to Joshua, telling him to arise and cross the Jordan River with the Israelites and providing him with the tools he needed to be strong and courageous in facing the giants and fortified cities and actually taking the promised land and entering into the rest the Lord wanted to provide them.

The first of these tools the Lord provided to Joshua was the confidence and assurance that taking the promised land at this precise moment in history was the Lord's will and he would be fully and actively supporting and empowering Joshua and the Israelites to accomplish the mission. The second tool the Lord provided was his promise that his presence and power would be with Joshua constantly wherever he would go and that he would never fail or forsake him. And finally, the Lord provided Joshua with the perfect manual and guidebook, the book of the law, the Holy Scriptures, to grant him the wisdom he needed for life and the mission, and to keep him completely in step with the Lord's purposes and plan. Joshua was instructed to read it, know it, meditate on it, recite it, speak it and put it into practice. Only then would he be able to be strong and courageous, successfully fulfilling his mission of leading the Israelites into the promised land and God's promised rest that had eluded them for the last 40 years. This was Joshua's roadmap to rest. And this is where we left off last week.

II. THE TEXT

So let's pick up now in verse 10 of Joshua, chapter 1, and see how Joshua responded to these instructions the Lord had just given him.

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it.'" 12 To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God gives you rest and will give you this land.'

14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, 15 until the Lord gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise." 16 They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18 "Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word!

III. JOSHUA RESPONDS IN FAITH WITH ACTION AND A CALL TO ACTION

The first thing I notice in this passage is that Joshua didn't debate with God or tell him he'd think about it for awhile and then decide if he was ready for the challenge. He didn't ask for more time. He didn't say, "God, why me?" He didn't make excuses as to why this calling was too big for him to handle. He didn't say, "Give me 3 months to plan and wrap up a few things, and then I'll see what we

can do.” Instead, Joshua knew, loved and trusted his God and expressed the faith and trust he had in him by taking immediate action. His faith was shown to be real by his obedience and willingness to take immediate action. He understood the Lord’s path to rest and knew that it didn’t involve questioning, doubting and delaying. Paths are made for movement and action and Joshua got right to it!

After God finished his speech, Joshua responded immediately by commanding the officers of the people to head out into the camp and tell everyone to start gathering provisions and getting ready for action. If they were going to take possession of the promised land and receive the bountiful blessings he wanted to give them, they were also going to need to respond in faith by taking action. The time was now and within 3 days they were finally going to cross the Jordan River. The 40 years of God’s discipline for their parent’s lack of faith and trust in him were over and now it was time to see if the children had learned from the huge mistake their parents had made in doubting the power of God and thereby forfeiting God’s blessings. It was their turn to make a choice to either doubt or trust. The command from Joshua was clear: Get up and start preparing provisions because the Lord your God is calling you to cross the Jordan within 3 days.

In Joshua’s command, I hear him communicating this to the people: I assure you that the Lord is giving you the land so that you can possess it. The question is: will you accept or reject the gift he wants to give you. Will you enter his rest? To accept his gift and enter into his rest you’ll need to respond in faith with obedience to the command I just gave you. You’ll need to do more than just say you believe in God. You’ll need to show that you really do believe in him by taking action to obey him and follow him into a mission that seems and is way too big for you to accomplish on your own. Faith expressed in obedience is the path to the rest and blessings God wants to give you.

And Joshua was showing the people how God’s path to rest works in the way he responded to God with trust and obedience. The question is: would they respond to God in the same way? And the question for you and I today is: how do we respond to God when he teaches us how to live in his Word or when he tells us to go do something that seems difficult? Do we stay on his path to rest, believing him, trusting him and taking action? Or do we head down a rabbit trail,

making excuses or pretending we didn't hear him, or perhaps convincing ourselves what he's asking us to do is just too hard or won't work in real life?

IV. JOSHUA CALLS THE REUBENITES, GADITES AND HALF-TRIBE OF MANASSAH OF THE REMEMBER THE ROADMAP TO REST

Well, as the officers of the people passed through the camp and issued the command to gather provisions within 3 days, Joshua turned his attention to a specific portion of the Israelites who had already taken possession of their desired land east of the Jordan River. These were the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. In already being allowed by Moses to take possession of their land east of the Jordan, these tribes had previously made a commitment and a promise of which Joshua now needed to require fulfillment.

Back in the book of Numbers, chapter 32, we find the account of how this happened and what these tribes had promised as condition of being able to take possession of their land. What we learn there is that the tribes of Reuben and Gad had an enormous amount of livestock and when the Lord allowed the Israelites to conquer the nations who had previously held the land east of the Jordan River...the kingdom of the Amorites and kingdom of Bashan...the Reubenites and the Gadites noticed that it was a perfect place for livestock. They then approached Moses to see if he would allow them to take possession of this land in lieu of having a future possession in the promised land west of the Jordan River.

Moses was initially very unhappy with this request because he assumed these tribes were planning to just settle in and let the other tribes go fight the battle for the promised land without their help. Listen to what Moses said to them:

6...“Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here? 7 Now why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the Lord has given them? 8 This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9 For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the sons of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the Lord had given them.” 10 "So the Lord's anger burned in that day, and He swore, saying, 11 'None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and

upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully, 12 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully.' 13 "So the Lord's anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the Lord was destroyed. 14 "Now behold, you have risen up in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to add still more to the burning anger of the Lord against Israel. 15 "For if you turn away from following Him, He will once more abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

Does Moses sound at all upset?! Having experienced the devastating consequences of the previous errors of the Israelites, Moses was not going to let it happen again.

In these verses Moses also shares with us a couple of interesting truths about the path to rest. First of all, doubt in the power of God expressed in discouraging ourselves and others from trusting God and following his Word, keeps us from finding rest. The discouragement and doubt brought back by the spies kept the Israelites from going into the land and finding the rest God wanted to give them. In the same way, if we don't trust God and his Word and believe his truth actually works and can be put into practice, we will not find the rest we're looking for. We'll be stuck in following the bankrupt advice the world has to offer which never brings rest or true resolution of issues. If someone is belittling God's Word and saying it won't work in real life, what are the chances they're going to benefit from it? Zero. In the same way if we're approaching God's Word with similar attitudes, even if they're not expressed verbally, we won't benefit from it and we'll miss out on the rest God can bring us through believing it and putting it into practice in our lives.

Secondly, we learn that following God fully is the path to rest...not just knowing God is real and saying we believe in him, but showing we believe in him by actually following him in full obedience. And as we all know, following involves action and walking, the very things you do when you're hiking down a path! Did you notice that Moses, in his response to the Reubenites and Gadites, identified only two people out of all the hundreds of thousands of Israelites, Caleb and

Joshua, who had followed God fully in trust and obedience and discovered the path to rest.

What about you? Are you following God fully today, or are you holding back parts of your life from him? Are you keeping him out of certain areas? Are you obeying him in most of your life, but keeping back a few things that you're not allowing him to touch? If you want his rest, follow him fully and don't hold back any part of your life from him.

Well, after Moses had his little tirade against the request of the Reubenites and the Gadites, the men of these tribes responded to what Moses had said and told him that regardless of whether Moses gave them this land east of the Jordan or not, they would still fight with their brothers to take the promised land for the rest of the tribes. In other words, their plan was not to just settle in and sit back while the rest of the tribes went to war without them. In fact, as a condition of receiving the land east of the Jordan River as their inheritance, they promised to do everything Joshua is now reminding them of in verses 14 and 15 of today's passage. Their wives, children and cattle would remain in the land east of the Jordan, but all their valiant warriors would cross the Jordan River with the other tribes in full battle array to help them take the promised land. They would continue fighting the battle with the other tribes until the Lord had given them rest and allowed them to take full possession of the land on the west of the Jordan River. Only then would they return to their wives, children and livestock and fully possess their own land.

Want an application for today? You can't find or enjoy your rest if you're goal is an extended siesta on a deserted island for yourself and you care nothing about loving your brothers and sisters and helping them find their rest. God always call us to community, and the rest he provides is in the context of loving him and loving each other, and oftentimes loving people involves fighting a battle for them and with them by God's power.

Well, after hearing this commitment and promise from the Reubenites and Gadites, Moses felt better about the situation and said this:

"If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, 21 and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until

He has driven His enemies out from before Him, 22 and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you shall return and be free of obligation toward the Lord and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours for a possession before the Lord. 23 "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out."

After promising to follow the conditions Moses had just laid out, the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh were given the land they requested east of the Jordan. And now, as Joshua prepares to lead the Israelites across the Jordan, he's ready to collect on the promises these tribes had previously made to Moses. He calls them to remember what they had committed to Moses. Both the rest and the land they had been given on the east side of the Jordan were gifts from the Lord, and to remain in that rest and continue in the blessings the Lord had given them they needed to follow the Lord fully and honor the promises they had made. Their rest would be found in keeping their promises like God always does, and in loving their brothers enough to lay down their lives for them in active warfare. Now was the moment of truth! How would the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh respond to Joshua?

V. THE TWO AND A HALF TRIBES COMMIT TO FOLLOWING THE ROADMAP TO REST

Thankfully, these tribes chose to follow the roadmap to rest, saying these beautiful words to Joshua:

"All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18 "Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

Isn't it wonderful to see people making a good choice for a change?! Keeping the promises they had previously made and thinking beyond just themselves and what they wanted, they started down the path to rest with willing submission and full obedience and no conditions about where they would go or what they would do. And this response flowed out of their trust that the Lord

would be with Joshua as he was with Moses and that he would be fighting their battles with them as they stepped out in faith.

Is your trust in God and obedience to him as unconditional as we see displayed here? *All you have commanded we will do. Wherever you send us we will go. In all things we will obey you.* Though it sounds risky and stressful and requires a letting go of control, it's actually the only certain path to rest and peace and joy in your life. We tend to think rest comes from controlling our situation and protecting ourselves at all costs. But God's rest comes from unconditional surrender, full obedience, and a relinquishing of control to him. As always, God's way turns us upside-down from what our human nature and the world around tries to tell us. But once we've been turned upside-down by accepting God's way, we find that we're actually right side up for the first time in our lives standing on the one true path to rest.

Well, the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh backed up their commitment to completely follow Joshua as he followed God, by making it clear that a deviation from this commitment by anyone from their tribes would be grounds for the death penalty. That's a pretty serious commitment, isn't it? They meant business and even provided a very powerful means of keeping themselves accountable and making sure no one wandered off the path to rest. I'd say these guys had learned something from their parent's mistakes, hadn't they? And their final request of Joshua was this: only be strong and courageous...the same directive the Lord had just given to Joshua 3 times in the verses we studied last week.

I think Joshua may be getting the message that he desperately needs the strength and courage found only in trusting the Lord, walking by his power, and obeying his Word. In addition to the clear direction he's just received from the Lord, Joshua has now received a swearing of allegiance to the death from a whole group of valiant warriors who have only two requests: 1) that he be strong and courageous; and 2) that he walk in the power and presence of Almighty God. The roadmap to taking the promised land and entering the rest God was going to provide was clearly laid out for Joshua. Now it was time for action! We'll see what amazing things happen when this roadmap is followed as we continue studying the book of Joshua in the weeks to come.

VI. REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

So what are some of the key features on the path to rest that we've picked up today? Let's review 5 of them:

- 1) Faith expressed in obedience is the path to the rest and blessings God wants to give you.
- 2) Doubt in the power of God expressed in discouraging ourselves and others from trusting God and following his Word, keeps us from finding rest.
- 3) Following God fully is the path to rest...not just knowing God is real and believing in him, but actually following him in full obedience.
- 4) God always call us to community, and the rest he provides is in the context of loving him and loving each other, and oftentimes the love he calls us to involves fighting a battle for other people by the strength God provides.
- 5) God's rest comes from unconditional surrender, full obedience, and relinquishing control to him...from giving up self-reliance to rely on God in all things.

Well, as we close today, I want to briefly clarify what I hope you've already realized. The type of rest we're talking about here is not a life lived on a beach towel sipping a margarita. It's not an escape from civilization to live a peaceful life alone out in the wilderness. It's not idle life where I sit around and watch God do everything for me. The type of rest we're talking about here is an inner rest for our souls that we can experience in the middle of intense battles. It's a rest we can experience as we're diligently working hard at our jobs; as we're sacrificially taking action to express God's love to other people; as we're working to resolve a difficult conflict; as we experience the death of a loved one; as we're living our daily lives and all that they entail.

This is a rest where we can find the peace that passes understanding in the most un-peaceful of circumstances. It's a rest where we can find quietness and joy and strength even in the middle of very difficult circumstances. This is a rest that ironically flows out of activity rather than idleness. We might call it an active

rest...a rest we experience as we actively know, love and obey God with the confidence that he is with us and fighting for us...that ultimately the battle is his and we'll only experience victory as he accomplishes it. We've already discovered some key features today on the path to this kind of rest, but I want to close with one more very important one: We find this kind of rest in the same place Joshua and another famous saint named Moses found it, and that is in the presence of the Lord and submission to his purposes.

Moses seemed like a pretty busy guy with a lot of responsibilities, didn't he? I don't imagine him lying around sunbathing on a towel in the desert, do you? God had given him a very large responsibility that required a lot of time and hard work and emotional energy. You may remember that at one of his low points with the Israelites, when they had just set-up and worshiped the golden calf, Moses was desperately seeking to know the Lord and his ways and find the strength and power he needed to lead that difficult group of people. The Lord responded to Moses by saying this:

...*"My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."* (Exodus 33:14)

In the middle of the hard work and challenging responsibility of leading a stiff-necked people, the Lord would give Moses rest and it would come through his constant presence with him. Moses would find his rest in the presence of God, as he lived in "face to face" relationship with him and walked by his power in obedience to his commands. And this is the same place we each need to find our rest: in the presence of the Lord, as we live in moment-by-moment relationship with and dependence on him through Jesus Christ, and allow his Spirit to give us everything we need to fulfill his purposes and calling...as we allow him into every area of our lives and let him transform us from the inside out through the power of his Word.

Are you living and walking continuously in the presence of God today? Are you seeking his strength and wisdom in everything and relying on him instead of yourself? This is the only sure way to find your rest. Next week we'll tackle part 2 of the roadmap to rest and discover what else we can learn in Scripture about finding rest for our souls, as we: ***"Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and [learn to] walk in it.***