

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Be Strong and Courageous

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In Joshua 1 we read of God telling Joshua on multiple occasions to “be strong and of good courage.” This exhortation and command of the Lord was certainly applicable for Joshua as he faced the monumental task of leading Israel to conquer the land of Canaan. However, this exhortation also provides us with a helpful reminder how we are to face challenges in our lives.

The first part of the Lord’s exhortation is for Joshua to “be strong” as we read in Joshua 1:6,7,9. This word means to be “fastened, established, and fortified.” Strength has the connotation of being grounded and immovable. Joshua certainly needed this resolve as he was faced with leading the people to conquer the land (Josh. 1:6) as well as following the totality of God’s law (Josh. 1:7-8).

In light of these difficult tasks God also exhorts Joshua to be “very courageous.” Courage is defined as “the mental or moral strength to persevere.” Commitment and resolve to finishing the tasks that were before Him were attributes that Joshua would cer-

tainly need as Israel was beset by challenges as they entered into Canaan.

We further see the meaning of God’s command in Joshua 1:9, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage: do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Even though difficulties were ahead God did not want Joshua to be afraid or be in despair. Rather, we see what truth Joshua could gather his strength and courage from: the fact that the Lord was with him wherever he went.

In the New Testament we read of similar exhortations to Christians. In his final appeals in 1 Corinthians Paul urges to “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). The Corinthian brethren were given many things from Paul in which they needed to improve, and Paul concludes by encouraging them to be established and have the determination to persevere. Paul also uses this same exhortation to “be strong” in Eph. 6:10, and in 2 Tim. 2:1. Paul certainly saw the need for disciples of Christ to be grounded and fortified. God also expresses

His command for Christians to persevere in several places (Rom. 5:3, 2 Pet. 1:6), showing us that we too must have the same courage that Joshua needed in order to be steadfast.

As Christians today we are often encountered by many trials. Perhaps you feel discouraged because some of your Christian friends are not acting as they ought, you feel lost having faced a severe life changing event, or you feel overwhelmed by the commands you are supposed to follow. Satan presents each one of us the option of giving up, weakening, or falling into a state of hopeless despair. The Lord understands the difficulty we face, but He desires us to be strong and courageous, while we press on to overcome the trials that beset us.

Just like Joshua we too take comfort in the Lord’s assurance: “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’ So we may boldly say: The Lord is my helper; I will not fear” (Heb. 13:5-6a). May we gather resolve from the Lord’s assurance and be strong and courageous as we do His will.