

# Prosperity & Success

Joshua 1:8-9



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**FOCAL Read Responsively Joshua 1:8-9** This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: **for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. {9} Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**

We live in a “self help” age. People want to know how to have “**My Best Life Now**” or how to “**Become a Better You**”, and the preacher or writer who can tell you how to do it can make lots of money and be rich and famous. Television personalities like Phil, Oprah and Joel give us a number of formulas for success. Many years ago one of the first of our modern “mega-Churches” departed from the traditional platform of the Church – ministry of the Word of God and Prayer – in favor of attracting crowds through marketing techniques. It worked! People flocked to this local Church, and its pastor gained nationwide acclaim.

Recently that pastor admitted that what he had done was a mistake. **Pastor Bill Hybels** recently stated<sup>1</sup>:

**"We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible**

<sup>1</sup> From Baptist Press – First Person: A Shocking Confession From Willow Creek Community Church Leaders

**between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."**

Let me quickly point out that this is not an "I told you so" sermon, nor am I pointing fingers at Hybels and the precious assembly of that local Church. We all make mistakes, and pastors – myself included – have made many. None of us have the liberty to point and jeer at another, but we do need to learn from one another's mistakes, correct our errors, and move on in the name of the Lord.

You will never become strong and effective Christians unless you follow the principles that God has given you. Your families will never produce strong Christian men and women who will lead this Church into the future unless you do as your God has commanded you. You cannot make a difference in the land unless you follow His directives and His Word. In short, you must be committed to reading and applying the Bible – the Word of God – in your own lives. You must be committed to prayer for yourself and others on a daily basis. Ministry of the Word and Prayer are the most important things that the Christian can do for his or her own well being.

As Israel prepared to go into the Promised Land what did God emphasize? Did He teach them to build better weapons? Did He tell them the best route to follow? Did the Lord tell them where the best rest stops were, or the best places to eat were at? No, not at all! The Lord said "Focus on My Word" and "Focus on My Leadership". A strong Israel would be a God led Israel, just as a strong Church must be a God led Church. When the maximum number of believers in the local Church are focused on

the daily reading and personal application of God's Holy Word, that Church cannot be destroyed. When God's people focus on private as well as public prayer, that Church can pass through the flame of adversity unscorched. God promised those who lovingly follow Him:

**Isaiah 43:2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.**

What must we do to live victorious in this present evil age?

### **1. The Victorious Believer Lives The Word of God**

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:8 **This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.**

Look at the first words of this text: "**This Book of the Law**". The Bible is not just a neat old Book that we carry to Church with us and sit on the coffee table at other times. The Bible is a **Book of Law**.

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A **Law** is something that is decreed by a higher authority for the common good.

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God gave His people the Bible because He loves us. He has set laws forth in this Holy Book that we must obey if we expect to be blessed in life. God told Israel:

**FOCAL** This Book of the law shall not depart **out of thy mouth ...**

The Word of God is YOUR Law, it is MY Law, it is OUR Law – but each of us must be focused on applying it to our own lives.

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The way of failure is to hear the Word of God and then spend your time applying it to your neighbor's life.

**“It is the Word of God and the work of God that changes people’s lives.” - Charles Stanley**

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The Lord wants you to take His Word and put it into action in YOUR life. Ask yourself as you read it, “What does this Word have to say to ME”? **King David**, a man after God's own heart, applied the Word of God diligently in His own life. He said of God's Word:

**Psalms 119:97-100 O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. {98} Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. {99} I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. {100} I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.**

When you read and meditate on God's Holy Word the Spirit Who indwells you empowers you to really live. The more you focus on God's Word and **meditate** on its teachings, the more God-minded you will be. David went on to say:

**Psalms 119:113-114 I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. {114} Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.**

Though peer pressure and the world may direct us to do the wrong thing, the heart filled with God's Word will always follow God's leading. The Christian who **“meditates day and night”** on God's Word will be less likely to fall into Satan's sin pit.

The Apostle Paul directed the wayward Corinthian Church to turn away from selfishness and sinfulness and to turn toward God's Word. The Apostle said:

**1 Corinthians 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.**

**“We have the mind of Christ”** - and yet, sadly, too often we focus on the mind of the world!

Notice next that living the Word of God follows a set pattern. Look again at the text:

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:8 This book of the law **shall not depart out of thy mouth**; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do

according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

The **Word of God should be in your mouth.** We experience things through our mouths. We eat great foods – steak and seafood – and delight in their flavors.

We like ice creams and deserts. After Church tonight many of us will go out and eat together, enjoying both food and fellowship. The Word of God should be in our mouths. We should be discussing the Word with one another, and encouraging one another in its study. We should be building our Sunday School classes, because this is so important to the growth of the Christian. When we are in the midst of suffering we often run to the doctors for relief. Would it not be better to do as the suffering Prophet Jeremiah did? He said to the Lord:

**Jeremiah 15:16** Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

When you sit in the famine of despair and suffering, nothing fills you better than a feast at the Table of God's Word. Read and speak the Word. But also meditate on it.

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but **thou shalt meditate therein day and night**, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou

shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Think about what God has said. The Scripture says:

**Proverbs 23:7** For **as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...**

**Matthew 6:21** For **where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

If your heart is focused on God's Word, your actions will follow your focus. This is why God told Israel **“meditate – think on My Word – day and night”**. If your mind is on God's Word it cannot be on Satan's deceptions.

But we cannot leave out the last part of this Holy Chain:

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, **that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.**

God expects us to **“do according to all that is written therein”**. There is a *doing* that must not be put away. We can put a piece of steak in our mouths, we can think about eating it, but if we do not DO – chew and swallow – we have no benefit. Jesus told His disciples:

**Luke 6:46-49** And **why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?** {47} Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: {48} He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. {49} But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

The doing of the Word of God always produces great results. We do exactly as God tells us to do without equivocation, and we shall be blessed.

**We cannot be godly unless we think godly thoughts. We will not be godly unless we do godly things.**

**2 Peter 1:4-7** **Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,** having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. {5} And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; {6} And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; {7} And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

God has given His people **exceeding great and precious promises that we might be partakers of the Divine Nature.** The Lord wants to bless us – but our blessing and prosperity is conditioned on our personal application of the Word of God in our lives. As our focal text tells us:

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:8 ... **for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.**

## **2. The Victorious Believer Practices The Presence of God**

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:9 **Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**

You cannot be victorious in this life if God is but a Visitor to your homes and your Church. The Bible tells us that:

**1 Corinthians 6:19** **What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**

We who have been saved by faith need to internalize the truth that **“the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest”**. On the day that you became “born again” God the Holy Spirit came to live in the Temple of your body. He is – as Jesus said – the Promise

of God, the “**Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive**” (John 14:17). This Holy Spirit – very God of very God – lives inside of you. **The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest**”. He is the silent Witness Who watches you as you go through this life. He sees you whether you obey God or not. He is with you throughout everything you do.

**“When we are faithful to keep ourselves in God's holy presence, and set Him always before us, this hinders our offending Him, and doing anything that may displease Him.”** - Brother Lawrence, *Practicing The Presence of God*

We need to learn to practice the Presence of God. We need to speak as if He is in our presence – for *He is*. We need to act as if He is in our presence – for *He is*. We need to move through this life as if He is in our presence – for *He is*. When we sit down to watch television we need to be aware that God sees what we are seeing – for He dwells in us. When we speak to our friends He hears every word we say. If we neglect to pray – to speak to Him on a regular basis – He knows that. God is with us because He has promised to be “**with thee whithersoever thou goest**”.

Most importantly, God is with us *even in the times of trial*. What does God tell Israel as they go into a hostile land? He says:

**FOCAL** Joshua 1:9 **Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither**

**be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**

“**Be strong and of a good courage**”. Why? Because God is with you.

**ILLUSTRATE** The Lord wouldn't have told His people “**be alert and courageous**” if the taking of the Promised Land was going to be a cake walk. No one tells you before you go to Wal-Mart on a shopping trip “**be strong and of a good courage**”. No one warns you before you go to a local restaurant to eat “**be strong and of a good courage**”. These things require no great courage. What Israel was about to do was going to require great courage. She was going to go against a vastly superior foe. Yet Israel was commanded **be strong and of a good courage**. Why? Because “**the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest**”.

No one tells you before going to Wal-Mart “**Be strong and of a good courage**”. Taking the Promised Land would be difficult – but God was with Israel.

The Promised Land – Canaan – was filled with threats and dangers. Sin brings danger and death into the land. Sin causes people to make wrong and Godless decisions. Sin is a robber and a thief. Sin caused the Canaanites to drift so far from God that they lost all sense of right and wrong. As a result these people would resist at every turn the way unto salvation.

Nothing has changed from ancient Canaan unto today.

The world will hate our message – that there is but one way to be saved, and that way is faith in Jesus. The world always hates that which does not go along with sin. Jesus tells us:

**John 15:18-19** If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. {19} If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

The world hates the Christian. The world believes us to be foolish. They think, “How can the death of one Man make payment for sin? How do we even know that there is such a thing as sin?” The world – under the mesmerizing power of darkness – will not willingly give up it's holdings. The world has its ministers of darkness posing as ministers of light. In the ancient and early Church the Apostle Paul spoke of Satan's dark ministers who **“were transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:15)**. People mocked the Gospel of salvation in Jesus' day and in Paul's day. That's to be expected, dear Ones.

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Adrian Rogers said **“Some people brighten a room just by leaving it”**.

Be an encourager, not a discourager. Encourage one another to **“be strong and of a good courage”**. Notice how Israel encouraged each other as they went into the Promised Land.

God tells Joshua “be strong and of a good courage”, and Joshua in turn tells the people to **“be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:9)**. The people respond encouragingly respond to Joshua, saying **“be strong and of a good courage”**. What a wonderful motto for a people to have!

Listen Beloved, if you are saved by faith in Christ, then your focus must be on His presence.

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The God Who was with you at the moment of your salvation is with you still. The sail that brought you into the harbor of joyous salvation is the same sail that that will bless you in this life – even as you go through trials.

God is there, whether you “feel” Him to be there or not. When the ancient Prophet Job was in the midst of terrible trials he said:

**Job 23:11-12** My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. {12} Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

What a wonderful statement is this, **“my foot hath held His steps”**. The great preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** said<sup>2</sup>:

**“He had watched every step of God, that is to say, he**

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2 In his sermon *Job: The Fair Portrait of a Saint*

had been minute as to particulars, observing each precept, which he looked upon as being a footprint which the Lord had made for him to set his foot in; observing, also, each detail of the great example of his God; for in so far as God is imitable he is the great example of his people, as he saith- “Be ye holy, for I am holy”: and again, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Job had observed the steps of God’s justice, that he might be just; the steps of God’s mercy, that he might be pitiful and compassionate; the steps of God’s bounty, that he might never be guilty of churlishness or want of liberality; and the steps of God’s truth, that he might never deceive. He had watched God’s steps of forgiveness, that he might forgive his adversaries; and God’s steps of benevolence, that he might also do good and communicate, according to his ability, to all that were in need. In consequence of this he became eyes to the blind and feet to the lame; he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. “My foot,” he saith, “hath held his steps”: he means that he had labored to be exact in his obedience towards God, and in his imitation of the divine character. Beloved, we shall do well if we are to the minutest point hourly observant of the precepts and example of God in all things. We must follow not only the right road, but his footprints in that road. ”

**ILLUSTRATION OF MISSTEPPING** There is an ancient warning given to all of us in the story of Lot's

wife. As Lot and his wife entered the city of Zoar she remembered the Word of God telling her “Don't look back!” Yet she thought - “Just one look won't matter. Who's to know?” She looked back .... and turned into a pillar of salt (**Genesis 19:26**). “**Remember Lot's wife**” (**Luke 17:32**). This unnamed woman stands forever as a testimony to those who will not keep their spiritual eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Word. The Lord said “**no man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God**” (**Luke 9:62**). Those who have been saved by faith in Christ are called to ever move forward, to honor God's call, to do His bidding, to draw ever closer to Him.

God saves a people so that they can serve Him, so that they can glorify Him in all that they do. We who are saved are called “Christian” because our Savior is Christ, our Leader is Christ, our Shepherd is Christ, our High Priest is Christ, and we are called to be like Christ Jesus our Lord. We who are Christians are called to obey Him Who gave His all for us.

Keep your eyes on the Lord. Do what He had told you to do. The fainthearted cannot win the land for God. **Be strong and of a good courage**. Make sure you're going where God tells you to go – then without hesitating *go there*. **Be strong, for God is with you**. Practice His Presence in prayer. Study His Word. Go forward in the Name of Jesus, and God will richly bless you.

May God's Word richly bless and keep you all!

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