

TROUBLED WATERS

Who remembers the song by Simon & Garfunkel called "Bridge Over Troubled Waters?" Well, from time to time, we all have troubled waters to cross! However, when God is involved there is no need to build a bridge (only men build bridges), God creates 'a path through' troubled waters! There is no need to go over them or around them, for God simply makes a way! Therefore, if you are facing troubled waters today, I have good news for you, a miraculous path is about to appear - a path that will get you to the other side. Troubled waters can no longer hold you back! You are going to cross over into your promised land. Yes, that is God's pledge to you this morning! Turn with me to **Joshua 3:1-6; 14-17...**

Now, the children of Israel are about to enter into the Promised Land. They are ready to claim their inheritance; the land of milk and honey that their forefathers had spoken about. However, before they can enter Canaan, they must first get past one final, major obstacle - the Jordan River. This would normally not have presented much of a problem to them, since the Jordan was only 100 feet wide at Gilgal where they had planned to cross. However, God had another plan, and He wanted to make sure no man would be able to take credit for what was about to take place. You see, God deliberately brought them to the Jordan River at the "time of harvest" (Joshua 4:15), probably around December or January when the rain was at its heaviest. During this time the Jordan swells to an impassable width of over 1 mile! That is 50 times wider than normal. So during harvest time, when the heavy rains had fallen, there was no way they could cross this river without a miracle (supernatural assistance).

In this passage (Joshua 3 & 4), we are able to see how Israel overcame the swollen river and entered their promised land. And as we do, I believe many of us will be inspired to trust God for a miracle in our own lives.

I believe that the things which worked for God's children over 3000 years ago will still work for you and me today. Therefore, we can glean a lot from what God did for Israel and in turn find out how we will be able to get through any obstacle that blocks our way and enter our Promised Land. Here are ten things we need to do:

1. **Go** - We need to get out of our comfort zone and pursue God. *"When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it."* (verse 3).
2. **Listen** - We need hear so that we can take instructions and get directions from God. *"There shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before."* Whenever we need to cross over troubled waters, God has something He wants us to hear. The words the Israelites heard challenged them to keep listening, and it helped them to follow the Lord better. Listening will help us follow the Lord as well!
3. **Watch** - Notice that the Ark of the Covenant is mentioned some seven times in Chapter 3. The Ark, was that special piece of Tabernacle furniture which symbolised the presence and power of God. It represented God's presence in the midst of His people. In other words, when God moved, they were to move. When God stopped they were to do the same. If you are facing a crisis, and are in need of direction, you must be sensitive to God's movement (in and around you). When He moves, you should move, and when He stops you should stop also. Wasn't this exactly what Jesus did when He walked the earth?

4. **Follow** - When the Ark of the Covenant moved, they were to "leave and go after it." Not only were they to watch God, they were to move when He moved. They were to pursue Him no matter what! As mentioned, this means stepping out of our comfort zone. Israel was about to follow the Ark through a river that was over 1 mile wide! That couldn't have been easy, but it was still necessary and correct! Following God may not be the easiest thing you will ever do, but it will be the best thing you ever do.

5. **Honour** - Notice that the Israelites are told to stay at least 3000 feet behind the Ark. This was so that they could easily see what was going on ahead of them. Another reason is that the Lord wanted no one but the Levites near the Ark. To get too close would have meant death. This is not just an aimless warning to instil fear, it has to do with honour and respect. When listening, watching and following God, there must always be a holy reverence and a fear of the Lord in our hearts.

6. **Commit** - Here we see God making a commitment to the children of Israel. He commits Himself to taking them across their troubled waters. Therefore, getting across the Jordan did not rest on their shoulders, but on His. It was God's plan to get them over and therefore it was His problem. God also promises to do it in a supernatural and powerful way! Observe, here God commits Himself to bringing His people across the Jordan, and all that remained was for God's people to commit to Him by trusting Him implicitly! Now, if God could be trusted in those days to keep His promises, then surely He can still be trusted today!

7. **Expect** - If we are going to get to the other side, we need to expect a miracle. The children of Israel had a major problem. All of God's promises were on the other side of their troubled waters. The river was over 1 mile wide and there were 2 million people who had to cross it. They couldn't build a bridge and they couldn't transport everyone over in boats. There was only one way around their problem and that was to go through it! I'm sure this is when the people must have reminded themselves that God had parted the seas to get His people out of Egypt - so this river was nothing to God! God had a plan... The plan was this, God said, *"When the feet of the priests enter Jordan, I am going to part the waters and lead you through on the dry ground!"* Observe, there was a condition in this plan, and it was that the waters would not part until the priests who were carrying the Ark stepped into the water. In other words, it took a step of faith before anyone following could see a miracle. God had a plan, but for this plan to work, it required faith on the part of His people!
8. **Act** - When the priests "acted" by stepping into that raging river, it parted and God opened a path of dry ground through the waters for His people. By the way, verse 16 says that the waters backed up to the City of Adam. This is some 20 miles north of where the children of Israel were crossing. God made them a path through the water that was more than adequate for His people to get through. We need to remember that faith honours God and God honours faith! And when He does, it will be done right and it will be done correctly. Therefore, be encouraged, the same God who did this great thing for Israel is still the same God we are serving today! Therefore, act on your faith today and expect a miracle to follow.

9. **Recollect** - When all the people had passed over Jordan, Joshua commanded one man from each of the 12 tribes to get a rock from the midst of Jordan and build a memorial on the Canaan side. These verses tell us that the purpose of the memorial was to remind successive generations of the power and faithfulness of God on behalf of His chosen people. That memorial would be an important landmark to those who would come after. Likewise, we need to remind ourselves (and others) of the great things God has done in our lives. Yes, we too need some memorials, so that we can testify of God's faithfulness. Never forget what the Lord has done for you. It is those yesterday experiences that will tide you over when the troubled waters of today and tomorrow arise in your life!
10. **Worship** - Whenever you first enter your promised land - the promises of God - you must begin by worshipping Him for who He is! It is very interesting to note that Joshua constructed two monuments. One on the bank of the river, and the other in the river. These 2 memorials served 2 different purposes. Notice what they were... The one on the bank stood as a testimony to the faithfulness of God. It was there to remind others of what the Lord had done and of what He could do. The other stood as a monument to the faith of God's people! Even though no one could see it, they all knew the monument was there! They remembered that they had believed God and it had worked. This was a monument that would remain hidden in their hearts. We all need that same kind of monument because it will cause us to worship Him and give Him glory! When you have trusted Him, and He has brought you through, never forget it! Build that monument in your heart, where only God can see it.

Many people here today are facing troubled waters. You do not know how you are going to get through them because the situation looks impossible. But with God all things are possible! He has already worked out a plan for you, and He has made a path through your raging river. There is a place of victory awaiting you on the other side, a place where you can shout for joy in spite of your troubles. God is faithful, and He will give you your miracle - the same way He gave the children of Israel their miracle. With a supernatural path through your trouble waters, He will bring you through!

To end, I'm going to use some creative license and play on the lyrics that Paul Simon wrote...

When you're weary
Feeling down
When tears are in your eyes
I will dry them all
I'm on your side
When times get rough
And friends just can't be found

With a path through your troubled waters
I will bring you through
With a path through your troubled waters
I will bring you through...