

Honoring God in Our Challenges

As Moses' successor, Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness. We call those years the "Wilderness Wanderings" because, from our perspective, they aimlessly journeyed and retraced their steps in the desert the entire time. From God's perspective, He led them the forty years so that a toxic, faithless generation would die off and their faith-invigorated children would enter.

Joshua obeyed the LORD and ordered the people to cross the Jordan. The priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the river, and it parted so the people could walk through on the dry ground, much like at the Red Sea with Moses (Joshua 3:17). While the dry ground appeared, Joshua ordered twelve men to carry stones out of the river and build a memorial. Notice the importance God placed on this action. Joshua 4:4-7 (NKJV):

⁴ Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; ⁵ and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, ⁶ that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to you?' ⁷ Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever."

We could spend an inordinate amount of time discussing the memorial stones across America. Almost every community has them to remember some event. My daughter's house backs up to a city park. A monument to American POWs stands in the SW corner. It has American, Iowan, and POW-MIA flags that are lit up at night. Every person who walks by the memorial, day or night, realizes the cost our veterans have been willing to pay for our freedom.

Washington, DC, has numerous monuments to important men. We honor George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, FDR, Veterans of various wars, and many more. These monuments are "story-starters" for tour guides, history teachers, and parents to recount our shared past.

America's enemies have taken many monuments down to silence and rewrite the American account. It is tragic when a person gets dementia and forgets who he is. It is just as sad for the country to get a national dementia and forget who we are. And woe to those who would be the cause of either.

We often think that the Promised Land of Canaan represents ease and rest. We sing songs like "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand and cast a wishful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie. We will rest in the fair and happy land by and by just across on the evergreen shore ..." We apply the Promised Land to heaven and the Sabbath rest for believers (Hebrews 4). There is a better application.

The Promised Land was not a racially restricted time-share resort for "Jews only." Canaan was filled with life-fulfilling challenges and plain hard work. It was not for the faint of heart. Hebrews died in the wilderness during the previous four decades. Immediately after entering the Land, God sent the next generation in their newly organized militia to destroy Jericho. After their uncanny conquest of that pagan city, they had more to do. God wanted to kill the Canaanites for all of their abominable behavior and rebellion against Him. Later, when the Israelis rebelled against God, He used the Assyrians and Babylonians to discipline His people in similar ways. This would be a reminder to the Hebrews for humble obedience to God.

As Joshua led the people, they established God's kingdom and rule in their nation. They developed into an army of warriors who fought the giants of the Land that their parents had feared. They did not have an easy

task in subduing their new home. Even when they rested from their conflicts, they had work to do in cultivating the land for crops and livestock.

We may long for ease when we reach certain objectives. We may expect our ideal job to be a cakewalk or our new location worry-free. We may want to take comfort in our presidential candidate winning the election and think we can sit back. In all of these things, the work is just beginning for us. Deep down, that's the way we like it. We are made to achieve and move forward under God's guidance. Each time we reach a goal, we find new challenges and obstacles – just like the Hebrews in the Promised Land.

George Washington and his troops crossed through the ice flow of the Delaware River in the wintry cold. Once across, they had no time for rest. The battle was before them. They were about to confront the giants of the American War for Independence, the Hessian mercenaries. The King had hired the most hostile and intimidating allies to fight the colonists. After defeating the Germans, Washington and the Continental Army engaged the British and Hessians for several years, finally defeating Cornwallis at Yorktown to end the war.

Even after the war, we had challenges and could not rest. We established a Constitutional republic and began trying out our wings. We moved westward and added states. We fought a second war of independence with the War of 1812. We kept moving and growing, sometimes with one step forward and two back. We cannot have a republic unless we are willing to do what it takes to keep it. It is not an easy task.

If we think of the Christian life as an easy one, we misunderstand it. Christians face numerous challenges every day. We are called “terrorists” by the current regime because they know Christians are the number one obstacle to their complete takeover of the country. They threaten to silence us with the giants of intimidation and various pressure tactics. It may feel like we are wandering in circles, but God is leading and has placed us here for this time in history.

Americans crossed over and fought for Liberty in 1776. We are fighting to reclaim it today. The weapons are different, but the challenges are the same. Our ultimate victory is more than removing Marxist traitors to America, it is to restore America as a God-honoring, God-led nation.

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