

JOSHUA—A YOUNG MAN

Depart Not Out Of The Tabernacle

*And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.
And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun,
a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. Exodus 33:11*

This verse has thrilled me many times. I love the wonder that is displayed here. This godly man, Moses, is in such a position with God that the Bible says God conversed with him as a man to a man! Moses is a marvel to me, over and over—his godliness... his holiness... his pureness... his brokenness...

all this and more, even in the Old Testament. Oh, may God grant it that I too might walk as this holy man of God walked! He was Moses, the man with whom God talked face to face.

In the verses just before this, we see that Moses removed the tabernacle and pitched it without the

camp because of the sin of the children of Israel. God could not dwell in the midst of such a stiff-necked people. Now, in the verse mentioned above, Moses had entered the tabernacle and God had come to speak to Moses in the form of a cloudy pillar. Here, we see again the awesomeness of a moment when God, the I AM of eternity, will speak to this man—Moses.

But the point that I want to bring out is that Joshua got to be in there with Moses. It doesn't say that he went in, but he obviously did, in that he "departed not out" when Moses turned again into the camp. As Moses communed with his God, Joshua got to be right in there beside him! Flat on his face beside one of the most godly men throughout O.T. history, Joshua was disciplined. Is there not a bit of holy jealousy that rises up inside of you as it does me? To be in the very sanctuary of God, as the presence of God saturates this godly leader, and listen and watch... Even now, my heart has a bit of a solemn hush over it at the thought.

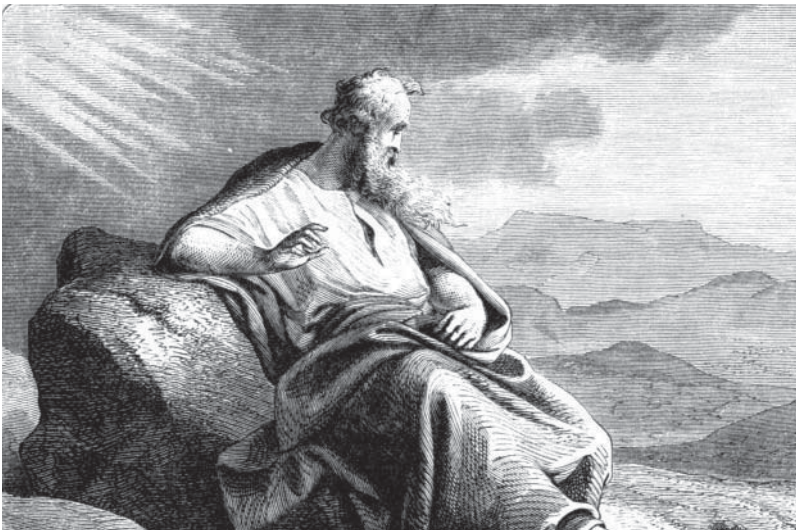
Now there came a time when it was time for Moses to "turn again" into the camp and face the people; but Joshua didn't. Moses had heard God's answer and now needed to go out and be a channel for God to speak to Israel; but Joshua didn't. Moses knew God in an intimate way and now needed to leave that enshrouding cloud to go be a mediator between God and His children; but Joshua didn't. He was Joshua—a young man, and needed to stay in the presence of God a while longer... he had a lot to learn yet... he needed to understand God more... he needed to be saturated in the glory of God till he too, like Moses, would view things from God's perspective... He was still Joshua—a young man. So God says, he "departed not out of the tabernacle."

Isn't this the reason God wanted Joshua in there with Moses in the first place? God knew what was in store for Joshua; and He knew that Joshua needed to learn all that he could from Moses and from being in the presence of God. He wasn't ready yet to lead this vast multitude of people... he wasn't ready to be the main mediator between God and Israel. He just needed to continue to allow God's heartbeat to saturate through his very being till his heart throbbed in perfect harmony.

I hope you can see this beautiful parallel God has given us: Moses went out to speak to the people, that which he had heard while in the presence of God; but Joshua "departed not." Young person, I want this to be a lesson for you as it has been to me. Our leaders may need to go out and take what they have learned and teach their church...maybe our fathers need to go forth and minister to their wives and children... the evangelist will go out and preach to the multitudes... but young men, is God calling you to just stay hidden in the tabernacle a little longer? Praise God if He is allowing you to see the vast needs of this sin cursed earth. It's by His grace alone if your heart is longing to spread forth His glorious name. But many times, I believe God is longing that we be willing to "stay in" a little while longer and we, chomping at the bit to go out, miss the beautiful things He is longing to teach us. I can hear Him say, "Son, press in to me a little while longer. Remember, you're Joshua—a young man."

We all know the many instructions that Proverbs has for young men. I think Joshua knew them too. Now he didn't have the actual book of Proverbs, but I'm sure he had heard many of the same things, though perhaps in a bit different way. As young men, we need wisdom. We don't realize what all we don't realize, and we don't know what all we don't know. We are also more susceptible to temptations of fleshly desires and pride. Joshua knew these things, and I wonder if his cry wasn't the same as Jeremiah's a few centuries later, "God! I'm just a child!" Maybe he glimpsed into the future at all the opportunities and responsibilities that soon would be his... As he lay prostrate on the floor of the tabernacle, tears streaming down his face, he may have wept, "God! I need you! I'm Joshua, a young man." I personally know those times, and thus it doesn't take much imagination for me to picture it.

To me, this is a verse where we get a glimpse behind the scenes of the makings of a man of God. As our hearts yearn to be and do all that we possibly can for God, ought not our hearts thrill at this little peep "behind the curtain?" Clearly, we know that Joshua became a mighty leader of God's people and a beautiful type of Jesus Christ. As we seek to have the same results and fruit of the men we



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admire, we will also have to take the same road that they took to get the same results. Young men, can I put out a plea? "...Depart not out of the tabernacle!"

When the preachers are out preaching... and the counselors are busy counseling... and the leaders are giving guidance and direction... and you feel rather small in comparison, don't go off and "play" thinking, "it's just not my time yet." "Oh, I'll grow up someday," is the thought. No, let us follow the example of Joshua—a young man, and depart not out of the tabernacle.

The tabernacle is the place of God's molding. It is in HIS presence that we are changed into a Moses. We can't skip this molding process, hoping to jump from a young man to a Moses. God doesn't work like that. We must know that tabernacle well, by reason of much use. It is then, as we have lingered long, that we will be able to appear with a shining face as Moses. Yes, Joshua knew he needed wisdom, he knew he was "a young man."

Maybe another reason that Joshua "departed not out," was because he knew he was the leader for the next generation. The next generation of God's people was going to be greatly affected by him. What an immense responsibility! A few million people were going to either be led into a glorious land flowing with milk and honey or they would be devastated and ruined by those around them.

Someday Moses was going to lay his hand upon his head and the responsibility of all these people would lie squarely upon his shoulders, as it now rested on Moses'. In Num. 27:21, God says, "...at his (Joshua's) word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in." That's enough to make any man fall down and cry out to God for help. According to me, things will happen, and according to me, they'll stop! Maybe that's why we still find Joshua on his face while Moses has already gone out. "God! I can't

do this. I don't know how... I don't know where... I don't know when..." Yes, Joshua stayed in the tabernacle. He was still Joshua—a young man.

But aren't we again in the same boat as Joshua? Where is the responsibility of the weight of the next generation going to land if not on us? Our fathers will pass off the scene; our children won't be old enough; it's us. It's up to you and me. At our "word" things will happen, and at our "word" things won't happen.

Someday our fathers' frail hands will be laid upon our heads, and the transfer will be made. Are you ready for it? Are you ready for the purity and direction of the church to be laid upon you? Are you ready for the eternal responsibility of undying souls to be laid upon you? There are over 6 billion of them out there.

I think some of these thoughts ought to make us want to stay flat on our faces in the tabernacle and use Moses' words, "Lord, if your presence go not up with us, carry me not up hence." "I can't Lord! What can I do? These mountains are just too high for me. There's no way I can fulfill all this. Help Lord, help! I'm 'a young man.'"

Let's not be impatient to depart out of the tabernacle, young men. We need to wait at His feet awhile. It's through Him and His power alone that we can completely fulfill the heart of God through our lives, to our generation. Yes, depart not "Joshua," you're just a young man.

If we were to ask, "Why, Joshua, did you stay in there so long?" After his face would have become sober, he may have responded, "I have a lot of enemies to face, and there's no way I can conquer them on my own." There were a lot of battles ahead for Joshua. He had a lot of foes that would raise up their head in rebellion to the directions of the God of the universe. There were many Amorites and Amalekites

and Jebusites and a host of other “-ites” that would rise up against them. Life and death was at stake. He had war ahead! He couldn’t just have a “win-a-few, lose-a-few” attitude... It wasn’t a matter of fun and toys; these enemies were real and wanted to take his life! To see his blood spilled over the ground would have been their greatest delight. “Lord, I’m here in the tabernacle because I’m a dead man without You. They’re much stronger than I am. I’m looking to you, my Father, I’m just Joshua—a young man.”

Do we know our enemies as Joshua knew his? Do we understand their magnitude and ability to overcome us if we stand there alone, without God? If you are truly seeing the enormity of our adversary, I think you will frequently find yourself in the “tabernacle,” on your knees, begging God to lead you on to victory.

We don’t have a barrage of persecution seeking to beat us to death. Nor do we have the fight of barely being able to get enough bread on the table to keep us alive. We have the opposite. We have the enemies of materialism, worldliness, and lukewarmness striving to lull us to sleep. They will then creep in and slay us. All the availability of stuff and things is reaching out it’s claws to pull us to the world and its styles and pleasures. All these things cause spiritual alertness and sensitivity to dwindle, which in turn slays perseverance and forward movement of the Kingdom of God.

Will we let this, our enemy, overcome us because we don’t see his fangs and claws? Have we not understood that those soft words and comforting caresses were his tactics to take us off guard? I think we should stay in “there” as long as we can. Because it’s as we sit, saturated with His presence, that the scales slowly come off our eyes.

It’s in the light of His holiness and purity that we are able to see the subtle direction of our own heart.

Could it be that that little desire to look a certain way is actually a longing for the world? Is it possible that I buy that particular style or brand name because there is a “spirit of the world” that has slyly penetrated my heart?

Oh, young people! Let us learn from Joshua, and depart not out of the tabernacle till we have gazed upon His glory long enough that He thoroughly purges our hearts. Let us stay on our faces and weep with Him, “Lord, in the light of these giants I’m just a grasshopper. There is no way I can make it through without You. But Lord, with You on my side, with my heart as Yours, overcome, I will!”

Joshua also knew the vastness of the land to yet be conquered. If he thought or meditated on that much at all, I’m sure he would have felt a keen sense of his need of God. There were thousands and thousands of acres and enemies yet to be conquered. Many, many wars lay ahead. Life and death and God’s great name were at stake. No wonder he had a desperately great need for the anointing of his God. Again, I can picture him wetting the ground with his tears, “Lord, You have got to do something!”

To all of you who fit this category of Joshua, I know this verse doesn’t say these exact four points that I have mentioned above. But as I have meditated on this scripture, I have tried to put myself in Joshua’s shoes. What position was he in? How would he have looked at things? What can I learn from him? The four points I’ve mentioned above were things that were clearly in his life and very applicable to us. I state them briefly for us again here:

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1.

Clearly, the Word of God distinguishes him as a young man. Thus he needed much wisdom. (Ex. 33:11)

Let's follow his example and *spend* much time before the Lord; in His Word, and in prayer, and other challenging material that will grow us from "a young man" to a Moses. Redeem the time that is in front of you. Moses' aren't made overnight. Neither are they made by relaxingly floating down the stream of your Christian life, busy with this material life, and only seldom entering the tabernacle. No, take time to be holy, speak off with thy Lord... spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone!

2.

It was up to him to lead the next generation. (Num. 27:15-23)

May I remind you again of that scenario I mentioned before, of the old men placing their hands on you because they're about to pass off the scene? Are you ready for that? Do you know how to gently and firmly lead? And do you know how to submissively follow and support someone else? Joshua learned those things by serving Moses and "departing not out of the tabernacle." As he was in there, he wasn't very noticeable or big in anyone's eyes. As he "departed not," he learned to lead, and God prepared him for the future.

3.

He had a tremendous amount of enemies to face. (Deut. 31:16-17)

Again, "Joshua," our enemies are clever. Though the enemies of our future may be slightly different than the enemies of our present, they are still dealt with in the same way—we can't, but God can. As was said above, the world and stagnation are trying to creep in upon us. "Depart not!" Joshua. We must stay "in the tabernacle" before God, and let all the earthly, fleshly temptations that are slowly sidetracking us be seen in the light of the presence of God.

4.

He had an incredible amount of land to conquer. (Josh. 1:1-11)

Oh! the vastness of untouched land is immense! We must not only guard that which we have, but go forth and possess all that God has planned for us. And according to my Bible, that's the whole world. That's no small feat! But until we move forward in the fray, our enemy stays in control.

To all of you "Joshua's," can I plead with you, "Please, depart not out of the tabernacle." If you don't feel like you have a place to serve... or maybe your place to serve seems very small... you don't know what God has for you... you feel like you're in a waiting mode... take the example of Joshua and depart not out of the tabernacle. Let's learn from this young man who became a godly leader, and follow in his footsteps. Yes, we see our parents or leaders, or those we look up to going in and coming out, going here and going there, preaching, teaching, and affecting other's lives. Remember, Joshua didn't start with that either. As we "wait" our turn, let us not "wait" our time frivolously away. But let us "wait" on our face, on the floor of the tabernacle, allowing that cloud of the presence of God to saturate and permeate our being. It's there that we are changed. As Corinthians says, it's as we behold His glory that we are changed into His image more and more.

Let's follow in the footsteps of Joshua—a young man, and "depart not out of the tabernacle!" □



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