

Entering into your Promise

“All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore {to give} to your forefathers. And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you” (Deut. 8:1-10).

If the nation of Israel had taken the direct and commonly traveled route, it was an eleven day journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:6), but because of fear, believing a negative report, and not believing in the word of His promise, God disciplined a nation for the next 38 years to humble them and make them understand that man lives by the word of God.

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63).

An eleven day journey turned into 14,400 days of travel. Because of disbelief in the promise of God, a short journey turned into a long, grueling and agonizing trip.

A generation willfully, with the exception of two, committed genocide because of unbelief, disobedience and a life-style of rebellion. It was a slow death in “nowhere” land. Rebellion is a defiance of or opposition to any kind of authority or control. This generation became known more for their obstinacy and rebellion than their courageous and victorious march out of Egypt. It was a great deliverance from Egypt, but a torturous walk to the land of promise. There was an average of 200 funerals per day for 40 years.

Moses, because of his blatant mistake, recognized his time of leadership was completed.

“And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan. It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and **you shall 2 dispossess** them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken” (Deut. 31:2-3).

Basically, Moses said to the people and Joshua, “I stop here—you are going to cross over and the Lord will never fail or forsake you.” “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you” (Deut. 31:6).

After the death of Moses, Joshua moved Israel from Abel-Shittim, about seven miles, and camped near the banks of the River Jordan. The last of the generation that was delivered from Egypt, 24,000, had died from a plague at Abel-Shittim. Joshua became leader of a new generation and positioned them on the banks of the river Jordan.

“(For the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest)” Josh 3:15.

Between you and your promise or harvest there is always a “flooding Jordan”, something that cannot be forded naturally, but the command still remains, “Cross over....!”

The tremendous force of rushing water is clearly recognized! Many deaths occur each year because of underestimating this force. It is also a challenging barrier, and in this case, the nation of Israel was blocked from proceeding any further.

These words are found in the last Song of Moses, just before he died.

"For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. Would that they were wise, that they understood this, and that they would discern their future! How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up" (Deut. 32:28-30)?

Before faith can be activated to do the impossible, one must discern his future. What has God said to you in respect to your place in the body, or what direction to go in your Christian life. How can you prepare yourself without hearing from God? A people who do not understand their destiny, purpose or future are vulnerable to fear.

First your destiny is general—heaven! But as you continue to walk a life of faith, what lies between heaven and the Now is gradually defined by the Holy Spirit. “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day” (Prov. 4:18). Pr. 16:9; Psa. 37:23.

The believers that do not discern their future, a one man army can chase 1,000 believers and a two man army can chase 10,000 believers. But a believer who discerns his future can turn this scenario around. He can do the chasing!

The mandate was clear: “Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are **to cross this Jordan**, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it” (Josh 1:11).

1. **Crossing over the impossible, a raging flooding river.** For two spies to swim the river and spy out the city of Jericho was not so difficult, but for a nation, numbering around 3 million with women and children, tents, baggage and livestock, to cross the flooding, rushing waters of the Jordan river, was not possible. The name Jordan means the descender. It was only sixty miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. A descent of several thousand feet.

2 The example of Abraham when he faced the impossible:

“Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed (inwardly), and said in his heart, Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child” (Gen. 17:17). Abraham laughed in the delight of the impossible! Gen. 17:17. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw {it} and was glad" (John 8:56).

Sarah laughed in disbelief and the Lord responded with: “Is there anything too difficult for the Lord?” Gen. 18:14.

In the wisdom of the world it was impossible for Sarah to have a child at her age. Likewise, for many of you who are past natural ability and strength to heed the command of God, to go and do, just laugh in delight at the impossible. “Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Rom 4:20-21).

Abraham and Sarah kept hanging on to the promise of a son when it became physically impossible. Faith will tenaciously hang onto the promise of God. It is imperative that we get a wrestler’s grip on God’s promise to us, and not waver because of what we see and our natural disbelieving thinking. You might be **too few** in number, **too weak** to fight effectively, or **too poor** in finances, but you can join the choir of believers as they sing, “Nothing is impossible for your God to perform.”

Mary, the mother of Jesus inquired, “How can this be” (Luke 1:34)? The angel replied back, “For nothing (rhema) shall be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)

Chuck Yeager, despite a youth in the poverty-stricken backwoods of West Virginia, became a fighter ace, a legendary test pilot, a leader of men, and an icon for generations. He did not shrink back from what many called, “Impossible,” that is, exceeding the speed of sound.

The date of Oct. 14, 1947 had been set for the attempt to do Mach 1. Two nights before the scheduled flight a slight problem developed. Chuck and his wife Glennis had gone out horseback riding and Chuck was thrown, and broke two ribs on his right side. He didn’t report this to the Army doctors or they might have given the flight to someone else. So Yeager taped up his ribs and did his best to keep up appearances. On the day of the flight, it became apparent that, with his injured right side, he couldn’t shut the door of the Bell X-1 with his useless right hand. He confessed his problem to Ridley, the flight engineer. In a stroke of genius, Ridley sawed off a short piece of broomstick handle; using it with his left hand, Yeager was able to get enough leverage to slam the door shut.

And that day, Chuck Yeager became the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound. Exceeding the barrier of what some called impossible became a launching pad for aeronautics that has taken man to the moon.

On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister, a 25-year-old British medical student, became the first man to run a mile in less than four minutes. For a number of years, after many futile attempts, many in the track and scientific worlds said it was humanly impossible.

His time was 3 minutes 59.4 seconds, achieved at the Iffley Road track in Oxford, England and watched by about 3,000 spectators. Within months John Landy and New Zealand's Peter Snell had bettered the record but Bannister will always be remembered as the man who ran the "miracle mile". What mankind calls impossible is only a hurdle to a believer who has placed his trust in God.

2. Crossing over into the unknown.

“However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 (.666 miles) cubits by measure. Do not come near it that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before” (Josh 3:4).

A change in the order of march for the Israelites was commanded by Joshua in obedience to God's instructions. The march had been organized by Moses some 40 years in the past and the order of march was never altered. But when the challenge of going into the unknown came, a change was necessary. The Ark of the Covenant, covered with a cloth of pure blue, was placed out in front of the column. They had never done this before. The eyes of the nation were to be focused on the Ark of His Presence!

Change is not always bad. When there is a change in leadership of a local church, one of the cardinal rules is not to change anything too quickly or there will be trouble. Invariably, someone will stand up and declare, "We have always done it this way and there is not any reason to change!" I have observed several pastors over the years lose the battle over changing the order of things too quickly. A newly installed leader must be patient, allow time for his/her leadership to be established, and then make changes.

The way that you are going to "crossover" the impossible and go into the unknown is by keeping your eyes on the Ark of His Presence and follows it into the raging impossibility.

When the feet of the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant touched the water, a miraculous shaking took place some twenty miles upstream at Adam, just below Jabok and a landside blocked the flow of the river for the amount of time required for the nation to cross over.

When the nation crossed over into Canaan, I am sure Joshua began to look for the footprints of Abraham.

Again Abraham gives to us a prime example of going into the unknown.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8).

The people of Ur, including Abram's family, were dedicated to the worship of the moon. It is not easy to break out of your social and family environment. Pastor Jerry & Trudy Roberts testifies of their decision to move out of their local area shortly after Jerry was saved. Jerry recognized the strong influence that his friends had on him, so he and Trudy packed their car and headed west, not knowing where they would stop. Can you imagine what family and others in the community said about their radical decision to move, "not knowing" where they were going?

Abram was required to leave his house and become a tent dweller, or live a nomadic lifestyle. When you consider the eternal plan of God to take the good news to every tribe, tongue and nation, many will have to leave their home and go into the unknown.

On February 28, 1803, President Thomas Jefferson won approval from Congress for a visionary project, an endeavor that would become one of America's greatest stories of adventure. Twenty-five hundred dollars was appropriated to fund a small expeditionary group, whose mission was to explore the uncharted West. Jefferson called the group the Corps of Discovery. It would be led by Jefferson's secretary, Meriwether Lewis, and Lewis' friend, William Clark.

Over the next four years, the Corps of Discovery would travel thousands of miles, experiencing lands, rivers and peoples that no American ever had seen before.

Louis and Clark on April 7, 1805 led their expedition out of Fort Mandan, North Dakota, where they had spent the previous winter, and headed west. On their maps, the land Louis and Clark were headed toward was indicated by a vast, blank space and the word "unknown". From that point forward every trail the expedition walked, every corner they rounded, it was new. No one had any idea what was to come, or what to expect. This is where the unknown begins.

On or about 2000 BC, God called Abram to leave his country of UR and his relatives and go to an unknown land that He would give to him. **It is just like God to send a believer into the unknown.** The rewards are reaped in the field of obedience. The journey may include adventure, pain, loss, and it may be a wild trip, but the reward of being obedient to God is worth it all.

When Tena and I took our first trip into the wilderness of Northern B.C., Canada, to minister to a tribe of Indians, it was into the unknown. We did not know what to expect and how to deal with a different culture. God gave us wisdom, stamina and vision and great were the rewards of this effort. The trips of ministry to the Indians in the far north prepared us to duplicate that experience in the Philippines. In 1983, Tena and I stepped off the plane and onto the airport tarmac of Zamboanga City, Mindanao. The challenge of the unknown stared us in the face. Since that time there have been many more similar experiences in other places of the world.

Moses was told by God to take the people of Israel out into the desert. It was a place that was unknown and how they were going to survive was also unknown.

Moses and the people were in the desert, but what was he going to do with them? They had to be fed, and feeding 2 or 3 million people requires a tons of food.

According to a Quartermaster General in the Army, it is reported that Moses would have to have had 1500 tons of food each day. Do you know that much food each day would require two freight trains, each at least a mile long!

Besides, you must remember they were out in the desert, so they would have to have firewood to use in cooking the food. This would take 4000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day.

And just think, they were forty years in transit.

And Oh yes! They would have to have water. If they only had enough to drink and wash a few dishes, it would take 11,000,000 gallons each day and a freight train with tank cars, 1800 miles long, just to bring water!

And then another thing! They had to get across the Red Sea at night. Now, if they went on a narrow path, double file, the line would be 800 miles long and would require 35 days and nights getting through. So there had to be a channel in the Red Sea 3 miles wide so that they could walk 5000 abreast to get over in one night.

But then, there is another problem: each time they camped at the end of the day, a campground two-thirds the size of the state of Rhode Island was required, or a total of 750 square miles long. Think of it! This much space for camping.

Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? I think not! You see, Moses believed in God. God took care of these things for him. Now do you think God has any problem taking care of all your needs on the journey of life?

When you do not know what is ahead, it can restrict your progress, but it must not stop you. Before the death of Jesus, He instructed His disciples about the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. He said that they would not be left alone, and the Spirit of Truth would be their guide and teacher. “Do not be afraid,” declared Jesus, “Because He will never leave you or forsake you.”

Trusting God is risking your present position on the wrong side of the river, but to inherit your promise you must cross over. Crossing over the flooding Jordan will take you into circumstances that He alone can keep you and deliver you.

Faith defies logic and reasoning. Your human mentality is limited to your capability. Faith takes you beyond human limitations and impossibilities into divine possibilities.

Sacrifice is connected with success. Every sports champion has had to sacrifice his comfort-zone in order to be the best. Intense training pushes the body and mind to their limits in order to excel. It was amazing to me that a contender in the 2006 Tour de France bicycle race won with a plastic hip.

3. Crossing over the impossible, the unknown and engaging in battle.

"And the LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear, or be dismayed" (Deut. 31:8). "It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and **you** shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken" (Deut. 31:3).

As Israel was obedient to the march, the silence and the shout in the battle of Jericho, God initiated an earthquake that shook down the walls and the key city of entrance into the land of promise was captured.

The 7 crooked shophars were used in the battle and the very same type of crooked shophars was used in opening the day of Jubilee. Lev. 25:8. Seven is the symbolical seal of the covenant between God and the nation, along with divine completeness. Jubilee marked liberty to those in debt and in prison. A freedom from past mistakes and circumstances. Engaging in battle, being obedient to God's instructions will bring the victory.

The conquest of Canaan was miraculous from the beginning to the end.

1. A supernatural crossing over the river of Jordan.
2. A miraculous victory at Jericho
3. God confounded the confederation of five Amorite kings at Gibeon and threw large hail stones on them as they fled in panic.
4. At the command of Joshua, the sun stood still for around 12 hours.
5. Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, one after another, like a falling row of dominos, the southern cities fell because the Lord of Israel fought for Israel. Through a campaign of lightning strikes southern Canaan was conquered.
6. A confederation of kings came together at the waters of Merom, near the lake of Huleh, a few miles north of the Sea of Galilee. In a surprise lightning attack, God delivered all of them into the control of the army of Israel.

4. Conquer and possess the land—the mandate of God.

If the nation had not crossed over doing the impossible and entered into the land of the unknown, and engaged into battle with superior forces, they would have never experienced prosperity.

The mandate was to cross over and possess the land, not just conquer and pass through. Conquering and possessing are two different matters.

A modern day example of the difference between conquering a nation and possessing it can be seen in the Iraq conflict. It took the coalition forces only a few days in 2003 to conquer Iraq, but possessing it has been a different matter. It has been over three years (2006) and it is difficult to see when control and order will be established in this turbulent country.

Satan was defeated with one fatal blow– the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus through death rendered “powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). That has been around 2000 years ago and yet we do not see the complete outworking of that major victory. All of the enemies of God must come under the feet of Jesus. Nevertheless, we keep our eyes on Jesus, high and lifted up on the throne of God.

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