

## Starting Over

I've always been impressed with the strength that our fathers had in the Old Testament to push on and move past people and events. Civilizations around them rose and fell, never to be heard from again, but the nation of Israel (at least in race) still exists today as it did back then, even though are not God's specifically chosen people anymore. Their history has seen leaders that surpassed the nation itself, such as Moses and David, and witnessed events that surpassed mortal eyes, like the crossing of the Red Sea. Every generation continued to see greater and greater things, with the victory of Elijah at Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18) and redemption of Israel with the help of Esther and Mordecai. Sadly came the time, however, for these great men to depart, Moses on Mt. Nebo (Deuteronomy 34) and Elijah in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2). With their great leaders gone, how could they ever expect to carry on the next chapter of their service?

This most certainly would have been the heavy thought on Joshua's mind as he prepared to lead the Israelites into the promised land in Joshua 1. For so long, Moses had been the one at the helm, guiding God's people under His leadership, and his death signaled an end to that era. Now it was his turn to lead the Jews into Canaan, but how would he do it? Would he try to copy Moses' method of speaking, or try to develop his own? Would he try to be as Moses had been, or become Joshua the leader, standing on his own two feet? It was vitally important for him to mimic the servant characteristics that Moses had towards God, but how would he follow possibly the greatest leader the Jews ever had? He realized however, that just because one great era has come to an end does not necessarily mean a bad one has to follow. Just because Moses had been greatly successful at his job did not mean Joshua could not be at his, in his own way. When God came to Joshua in Joshua 1:2, saying, "*Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, and go over this Jordan, you and all this people,*" Joshua realized it was his turn to act. The only question was, how would he approach it?

This philosophy of only looking ahead works especially when negative events have occurred in our past. David's encounter with Bathsheba illustrates this point perfectly. Because of his adultery with Bathsheba and eventual murder of Uriah, David was told his son would die. In other words, the blame for his son's death would rest purely on his shoulders (2 Samuel 12:14). What a load to carry! The rest of 2 Samuel talks about the mourning and fasting that David did on behalf of his child, only to have it die, true to the Word of the Lord. But instead of murdering himself over and over again in anguish of what he had done, after the child dies, he gets up, cleans himself off, and sits down to eat. To this his servants are astonished, but David utters the

most simple reply, saying, "What can I do about it now?" (2 Samuel 12:21-23). This example of a complete turn-around in his actions must have been painful, but David understood the value of the future. Wailing for his son would not bring him back, but learning from his mistakes and using them to make himself a better person would make the situation have some profit. How many times have we squandered our future because we have spent time wailing about the past? The attitude of a Christian is not "Look what I have done, it's all over," but "I know my past has been less than stellar, but I'm going to make my future be the best it can be." Take the lessons that you have learned from your mistakes, and your successes, and use them to shape a more God-centered future.

In our own lives today, there will be many events that happen in our past that will force us to examine how we will handle our future. "I can't be a good Christian, too many people know what I have done," some may say. "Look at how I handled it last time, there's no way I could do any better next time it shows up," still another will claim. If this argument was true, then nothing on this earth would be accomplished as "*all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). The difference between those who succeed and those who don't is how you let the difficulties of the past affect how you approach the future. If Joshua had let the majesty of Moses' reign blind him from his own abilities, and tried to "live up" to that reputation, Joshua would have failed; there could not be another Moses. Joshua was left to evaluate his own abilities, and rest on the promise that God would be with him, and that he would be successful in his own endeavors (Joshua 1:8).

The ending of one aspect of our lives signals the beginning of another, each one more exciting and hopeful than the last, but living in the past and reflecting on past mistakes all the time does no one any good. In a book that deals heavily with the supremacy of Christ's true law over material worship, Paul states something very logical that can apply to our service to Him: "*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above*" (Colossians 3:1). Why, if we have been raised with Christ, would we still seek the things on earth? In the same vein, if we have been raised in Christ, why would we still walk in our past lives? 2008 may or may not have been a good year for you, but I'm sure we all have things that we wish we could do again. Instead of squandering opportunities in 2009 by thinking about events in 2008, live in the present, always growing and abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). Remember, the one thing that never goes away and stays with you through all the transitions in your life, is our Lord. "*Be strong, and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*" (Joshua 1:9).

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