

Living Offensively: Cross Over

Joshua 3:1-17

I. Living offensively requires moving forward; 3:1-6.

¹ Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. ² After three days the officers went throughout the camp, ³ giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. ⁴ Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it." ⁵ Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you." ⁶ Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they took it up and went ahead of them.

Joshua and all Israel set out early in the morning from where they had been encamped. The ark symbolizes God's presence with Israel and His sovereign leadership of the coming invasion. God's presence among His people was not to be taken lightly or abused. The Israelites, as they kept a proper distance from the ark, would be shown which way they should walk, both physically and spiritually.

After the officials had completed their instructions, Joshua gave them an additional task: to consecrate themselves. The idea is that of separation from things that are unclean - anything that would contaminate one's relationship with a perfect God. The requirement for ritual purity signals that this river crossing is a solemn act of obedience, not an ordinary military invasion. They were going to see some amazing things. These wonders were so impressive that they astonished people and caused them to praise God.

God's Word still shows us how to live offensively and how to walk every day moving forward, physically and spiritually, in obedience to complete the mission that Jesus has given to us. We must be holy and separate from sinful attitudes and behaviors that hinder us from fulfilling God's purposes. All we do in life is part of our relationship with God and is a solemn obligation to our God. When we approach life in this offensive way, we also see God do amazing things.

II. Living offensively is following God; 3:7-13.

⁷ And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. ⁸ Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.' " ⁹ Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. ¹⁰ This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. ¹¹ See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. ¹² Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. ¹³ And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD--the Lord of all the earth--set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap."

The initial confirmation of Joshua's leadership would be the great miracle that God would do. With their own eyes Israel will recognize Joshua as their divinely appointed leader to trust and to obey. The purpose of God's exalting Joshua was for the larger purpose that Israel would know that God was with him. Rather than stop at the water's edge, the priests are to stand in the middle of the Jordan. The vague instruction anticipates the stunning event soon to follow.

Their living God is in contrast to dead, false gods of the seven peoples who are named. The ark was to be their guide, and its position at the water's edge would signal the beginning of the miracle. When the priests carrying the ark stepped into the Jordan, the waters would stop flowing.

As we live offensively, being who God has called and mandated for us to be, God goes ahead of us. God's working through us is still a testimony to God's glorious presence among His people, working on their behalf to accomplish His will and purposes, centering on the gospel.

III. Living offensively puts us where miracles happen; 3:14-17.

¹⁴ So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵ Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, ¹⁶ the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over

opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

Here we finally read the account of the miracle that has been anticipated from the beginning of the book. The Jordan River, at flood stage, was completely stopped when the priests carrying the ark stepped into it, and the people were able to cross over on dry land.

When we live offensively, we see God perform miracles in transforming the lives of people. As we step out in faith and obedience, God goes ahead of us and we see the power of God at work in the world.