

From My Bible

Sermon Notes
& Outlines

Moving Forward

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Introduction

These messages are compiled from study notes and outlines of my own and many others. I hope they are a help to you.

I'm sure that all of us have at times "borrowed" or "used" a sermon we heard or read somewhere along the way. A thought, a word, or an idea jumped out to us from another preacher and we took that thing and ran with it. You have probably used an outline from a preacher brother but ended up preaching something that was uniquely different. Same idea, it just came out differently when you preached. Using your own thoughts, experiences, and illustrations.....the message became your own.

I heard an old-time preacher once say, "*Any message worth preaching ought to be worth preaching again!*" Well, I have certainly preached some sermons again and again. I have borrowed from others to preach theirs again too. Please use these messages as the Lord leads and preach His Word over and over again!

I make no claim of complete originality for this material. Also, please remember that these messages are not expected to substitute for your own personal study of the Word of God! The thoughts and ideas are given as a catalyst to help begin your ideas on a given passage of Scripture or trigger a seed thought to get you going. It is my prayer that the "stuff" contained here will further kindle the fire of God's message that is already in your heart. Your own thinking, praying, and studying will be necessary to guide you into the delivery of His Word to your own people.

May these sermons become *messages* from the Lord that He uses in your own life as He has used them in mine.

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Go Forward

Text - Exodus 14:13-15

*The following message is from the Berean Baptist College
Commencement address given on May 18, 2006.*

Introduction: In Exodus Chapter 14, we'll begin in verse number 13. This is the scene. The children of Israel have been led out of Egypt by Moses. Moses is not just an ordinary man; he is the leader that God has called to lead His people out of bondage. In doing so, the Lord has worked a number of different miracles through the call of Moses. Beyond that, there were many plagues that the Lord threw upon Egypt in an attempt and an effort to get them to let His people go. Among the other things that He did, He hardened Pharaoh's heart, and through one degree or another, step after step, episode after episode, it finally came to the point that Egypt and Pharaoh let the people of Israel go.

And as the Israelites were leaving, they came to a juncture in their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, that was probably one of the most amazing events that took place during their journey. As a matter of fact, what happened in this scene when Moses by the power of God parts the Red Sea, is going to be a time that Israel will remember for the rest of their life. But beyond that, generation after generation after generation will remember the episode at the Red Sea. Eight hundred years later the prophet Isaiah is going to write about when God brought them through the dry ground of the Red Sea.

When you get to the New Testament in the book of Hebrews. the writer tells about how by faith, Israel passed through the Red Sea. We're talking about something that to this day in 2006, a Jew knows full well where God brought them from, what God brought them through, and what God took them to.

It would be a great day in America when Christians realized what God brought them from, what He brought them through, and what He's carrying them to. Praise God there's something better than graduation from school, and that's graduation from here to Glory. That'll be an exciting time. But in this episode that we have here, we now get to verse I3. The Israelites are at a point where you might call them "trapped." They're right there at the Red Sea. They can't go to the right or the left. they can't even go forward because of the sea, and Pharaoh's army is coming up from behind. In verse I3, they all look to Moses.

Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he 'frill show to you today: for the Egyptians whom he have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. The Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: I want to use those two words tonight for the message to these graduates and to all of us that are here: Go Forward.

Graduation is a mixed bag of tricks so to speak. You don't really know what to do. The next step for you is the biggest one. You thought it was big when you came to college, but the next one is when real life sets in. Now, I know you've had bills to pay, and books to read, and lessons to do, and classes to take, and visits to make, and everything else in this long list of things they put you through for four years. But remember this, this is not the end. This is only the beginning. All of this was preparation time. All of this was practice. The fact of the matter is, that's what education at school was for you, it was practice. It was getting ready for what God has for you because it's not a matter of, as in the case of Israel, there isn't anywhere to go back to. There was for Israel.

There's no need to go back to Egypt. Now some foolish people even suggested it, but there is no way back for the people of God, there's only forward. There is no way to go to the right, there's no way to go to the left. The truth is God wanted these people to forward. Now, He had before them a sea of impossibility, there is no way humanly speaking they can go forward. But by the grace of God, you can go wherever God leads you to go. And I don't know what the Lord has for you young people. I have no idea. For some of you it may be marriage, it may be a career, it may be pastoring a church, it may be working as an assistant pastor. I don't know exactly what area. You may end up leading singing; you may end up singing some special solo. It might just be knocking on doors or running a bus route, but wherever it is, if that's where God leads you, I challenge you to go forward and don't look back. Don't question where you came from or worry if I should've done this differently.

From here at graduation, there are many directions you can take. You can take your way. Now, believe me, there's been plenty of people graduated from Christian college that, after they got out, decided to go their way. It's like all that practice, and all that education, and all that knowledge, and all that time, and all that money, meant nothing. I'll just do all of that and now, what am I gonna do with it? I can take you tonight to Jessup, Georgia, to a boy who graduated from our Christian school, went off to Christian college, four years, as a preacher-boy graduated, and is doing absolutely nothing now. Now that's a shame. I'm not proud to mention that. It's a shame that his life now, after all of that time, is wasted. You know what his mistake was? He refused to go forward. He chose to stop. He didn't really go back. That was a choice. He didn't go right or left. Those were choices. Going forward was a choice, but he didn't get that one. He

took the one that said, “Just stop. You have reached the climax of life.” No, you’re a long way from it.

June 6, 1944, was the invasion of Normandy - “D-day.” If you know anything about it at all, you know that there were tremendous odds and a lot of loss of life. Blood ran so thick, it is said that the ocean turned red for many feet out into the surf. All because some men challenged them to do what I’m challenging you to do tonight. They chose, no matter what the cost, we’re going forward. We’re not going back - there’s no going back to the boats - we’re going forward. And by the grace of God when they went forward a lot was accomplished, and maybe the ultimate victory for the allies was keyed on that one thing that these troops were willing to go forward. If you don’t remember anything else tonight, remember go forward.

By the time we get to our text Moses has, if you will, graduated from being a shepherd to being an emancipator of a group of people. Israel has now by this time graduated from their slavery and bondage to be a free people. They’re on the brink of something special, something abnormal, something so miraculous. Listen, I don’t believe a one of them had an idea of what was coming. I mean, maybe Moses, and then I’m not so sure he did. It’s almost as if the Lord gives him a gentle rebuke. He says to the people, “Stand still and see the salvation of God.” He lifts up that rod of Moses, the rod of God and the sea begins to part. But when he says, “stand still” the Lord says, “Why are you crying to Me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward.” I can hear the deacon board now, “There’s too much water out there. Have we had a research committee check into this? Have we voted on this in business meeting and church conference? Is Robert’s rules of order being followed correctly here?” Thank God none of that was there

to complicate the issue. There was no need to study this any further, just Moses tell them, tell them, tell them, to go forward. And that's all I want to do tonight, is tell you to go forward. There is so much out there that God would have for you. Go forward.

To me this implies three simple things. The first one of those is "**Position.**" You cannot go forward if you don't know where you are. It'd be dangerous to take a step in any direction if you don't know where you are. I graduated in 1973 from high school. In that era of time in the early 70's and the middle 70's that was the time when people all across this land, particularly young people, were in a quest to "find themselves." That was a generation that thought that the way to find yourself or to find out where you are was to make a journey, to go through certain wild and psychedelic experiences. It's not unlike our world today where young people, even at your age, are taught, "go out there and try everything there is." And don't you think just because you have graduated from a Christian college where the Word of God has been a primary source of instruction in your life, don't you think for one minute the world's not gonna tempt you when you leave these doors. Cap and gown may come off, but the devil is still alive and well on planet earth doing everything he can to ruin the lives of young people - and older people - and everywhere in between. I believe position is extremely important. He says to them, "Stand still." That does give us some modification of their position. They are in a standstill position, evaluating the situation. I challenge you tonight to evaluate your situation. Stand still for a moment, get your bearings, know where you're at, and go forward. Now, where are you? First of all, you're in a fine, outstanding place here. You know that. You're in a good church, a good school, you're with people who support you and back you, but I guarantee you before you take that first

step forward, you've got to be really concreted in this. "I know where I stand." Let me challenge you young people with this. You've been taught it, and I'll guarantee you there's other people who have been taught it too, that drifted from the truth. Don't you drift! Don't you ever drift! You stand true to everything you've ever been taught, you've ever heard preached. Don't you give up on that King James Bible. Don't you give up on Salvation by grace. And don't you give up on the fact that souls are out there that need to be saved. Don't you give up on it. Stand! Take a position. One thing we don't like about these sorry politicians today is nobody's got enough backbone to stand. There's too many today that won't take a position. And your position matters.

As I read my Bible, I find out there are many positions indicated in scripture. The Bible speaks of those who are "in Adam." The only thing they can trace their line back to is man - Adam. There are some who are "in the flesh," some who are "in the Spirit." Then I read of some who are "in Christ." May I say to you tonight, position matters all around the world. You can be in a Christian college, you that are visiting tonight as friends and family to encourage these graduates, I just want to challenge you. You can be in a church, you can be in a choir, you could be on staff at a good local, Bible believing church, you can be in positions of honor and dignity, but you can be lost and on your way to Hell without Jesus Christ as your Savior. I don't care if you're in the greatest church, the nicest church, the most wonderful choir, you may be on the deacon board, you may be in the ministry, you may have been baptized in every creek, every river, from here to the Mississippi till every tadpole knows your name, but if you're not in Christ, you're going to Hell. Position, position, position matters. Before you go forward, know where you stand.

A second word I give to you tonight is the word “**Progression**” - you gotta go. You’ve got to make progress. Nothing’s worse than seeing a pool of water that’s stagnated beside the road. There used to be a bubbling fountain, or maybe a wonderful pond, or something, or a beautiful lake, but now the water is stagnant because there’s no flow. There is no “go.” That’s something that’s needed today. In Hebrews Chapter 6, verse 2, the writer of Hebrews encouraged the people there to go on, go on. The idea was go on to maturity. After about four years you’re probably convinced you know more than all the Bible teachers in your school. “Oh, I could teach circles around him. I studied the doctrines better. I know the dispensations so much better. I could even spell ‘theology;’ I’ve worked on all those things.” You may, but you’ve got to go on. What you have learned is a foundation. It’s just a foundation. Do you think you’ve plumbed all the depths of the Word of God? All these faces of these great men that are on this wall tonight, those men I have read book after book after just about every one of them, and I’ve found out all they say, the more they study the Word of God, the more they say this, “I have not studied it near enough. I’ve only scratched the surface of it.”

And I’ve been preaching for a number of years, and I feel like I’m a little boy in the shallows, and maybe I’ve got in ankle deep. But I can remember when I was a younger man, I thought the water was up to here, and any moment now I’ll be in the depths of the riches of the Word of God. I’ll know it all. And the more I study it, the more I find out how little I know. The more I draw closer to the Lord, the further I feel like I’ve gotta go. So I’m challenging you to go - progression. Make progression. I believe in setting goals. I think it’s important. Where do you want to be in two years? Where do you want to be in five years? Where do you want to be in ten years? I want to live my life. I’ve got a lot of

things in the future I want to do for the Lord, but if the Lord comes back within two years, where do you want to be when He comes? Shall He find you waiting, watching, and working, or just stagnating?

The third word, I suggest this to you, is the word **“Provision.”** I guess college students learn this. That is, “Wherever God guides, He provides.” I know school has probably been tough for you in a lot of ways. And maybe all of us don’t understand everything that many of you went through to get to this point, but God understands what you went through. Some of you here tonight that have family members in the hospital, some of you tonight don’t have any family here, God knows what you’ve been through. And I assure you, when we think of provision, what we think of is money. And we do want money provided, don’t we? When I say

provision, when I said the word “provision” you probably thought, well he’s probably talking about money, and houses, and lands, that God can provide, because there’s nothing wrong with wanting to have a family, nothing wrong with wanting to have a house, nothing wrong with wanting to raise your children, that’s a wonderful thing, but that’s really not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about God’s provision of His grace that will be sufficient, because you’re gonna need His grace in days, and weeks, and months, and years to come. You’re gonna need it more out there than you ever needed it here when real life sets in. There will be human provision. God provided Moses and his rod to accomplish this great miracle, but there was also divine provision, and that is, that God stepped on the scene and parted those waters. Oh, it was not a little swamp they waded through; it was a great, giant sea, and God parted those waters, and then by that great east wind, dried out the ground

that they might walk across on dry ground. Then He turned those waters in and swallowed up Pharaoh and all of his army to destroy them. God will provide. I notice where Moses said in verse 14 “The Lord shall fight for you.” I assure you tonight, God will fight for you. God will provide for you. It may be grace, it may be human endeavors that somebody might step up beside you and help you, it may be some divine thing that God does for you, but whether He has to harden a heart or He has to soften a heart, God will do it for you. I believe this. I don’t believe God is any respecter of persons when it comes to doing something special. I don’t believe He just does it for me, or He does it for your preacher. God will do it for anybody who is willing to follow Him, and who is willing to go forward. I think many times when I read this, as Israel had to march, they had to turn their back on the world. That was Egypt, which is a type of the world. To make that journey, they’re looking at the water, I know how these guys work, I just know they work, they didn’t just stare at the water and wait for Moses to hold up the rod - these are real people. They would do what you would do ... looking both ways. They’re looking at the water, “Alright Moses. Let’s go. Part the water. There they come.” I guarantee you, ninety-five percent, if not one hundred percent of them, were looking forward and looking backward; they were looking both ways. “Where we gonna go. Part the water, part the water, hurry, hurry, hurry.” I don’t believe everybody just walked through there and said, “Isn’t it a beautiful day? Look at the fish. Isn’t this beautiful?” No, I think there were probably many of them that were panicking, probably a little bit worried and scared, and I can see them now looking back over their shoulder thinking any moment now, Pharaoh was going to come up on their back side and get them.

I think of that in the modern terms today that's used so frequently, "I got your back." I want to say to you young people, and I don't mean it in any disrespectful way at all, God's got your back. You just go forward. Don't you worry about if they're gonna get me from behind. You just go forward. You don't even need to look back. Just go forward by the grace of God. David Livingston was one of the greatest missionaries this world has ever known. He was famous for many things, and one of them was this quote. It is said that when he died in Africa, they cut his heart out and buried his heart in the earth of Africa because he said, "This is where my heart is," then they took his body and shipped it back to Westminster Abby and buried it there. And on his tombstone "Granite may crumble, but here lies Living Stone." David Livingston said this - I've written this down and I keep it in my office and read it on a regular basis, "I shall go anywhere provided it's forward." By the grace of God, young people, let me challenge you, if you go anywhere, go forward.



Moving Forward in the Home

Text: Genesis 2:18-25

Introduction: This message is the first in a 3-part series on *Moving Forward...In the Home..In the Church..In Life.*

There are times in our Christian life that we find ourselves moving forward and at times we find ourselves moving backward. Sometimes we find that we need to go forward because we have gone backwards. Yet there are times that we find that the way forward is backward. Such is the case before us in this message on moving forward in the home.

Sometimes we may feel like the employees of a certain department store that received the following memo:

Subject: Marketing Forecast

Sales and income figures show an easing up of the rate at which business is easing off. This can be taken as ample proof of the government's contention that there's a slowing-up of the slow-down. Now, to clarify that, it should be noted that a slowing-up of the slow-down is not as good an upturn in the downturn. On the other hand, it's a good deal better than either a speed-up of the slowdown or deepening of the downturn. Also, it suggests that the climate is about right for an adjustment of the readjustment to rate structures. Now, turning specifically to rates; we find a very definite decrease in the rate of increase. This clearly shows there should be a letting up of the letdown. Of course, if the slow-down should speed up, the decrease in the rate of increase rates would turn an increase in the rate of decrease. And finally, the inflation of the recession would turn the recession into a depression while a deflation in the rate of inflation would give the impression of a recession in the depression.

That could be confusing. Let's make sure we are not confused on some key things:

Christian counselors identify 7 major enemies in the home:

1. **Mobility** – families are being uprooted
2. **De-personalization of society** (ATMs, texting, computers)
3. **Sexual revolution**
4. **Affluence**
5. **Permissiveness in childrearing**
6. **Media**
7. **Alcohol and drugs**

There are more enemies that we could identify but these show the importance of maintaining and developing a commitment to godly values.

Let us look backwards at the first family in the Bible...

God's Interest– verse 18

The creation story is not some fairy tale. We believe that a holy God created everything...Everything my God created was perfectly good.

Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 1:10 - And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:18 - 8 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:21 - And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

But when God saw that Adam was alone, for the first time something wasn't good. God noticed Adam's incompleteness. When God presented Eve to Adam, she was all Adam was not.

God was interested and concerned for the need of Adam. He also cares about your needs as well. God is interested. God knows what you need when you need it.

Matthew 10:29 - Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

God sees what makes us incomplete. He knows you need someone. God has a plan for each one of our lives. God is interested in your need today, He loves you, and cares about you just as He cared about Adam.

Eve's Construction – verse 21

You may not understand how all of these things happen....you don't have to know. Just believe it happened. Eve was taken from Adam's rib. God didn't give you a woman to abuse her. She is your helper; the queen of the house. God created the woman to be a complement; to be a *completer*.

God made Eve for Adam....she was his gift. God brings people into your life to help complete you. Though you may not see or understand it all, God doesn't make any mistakes.

Adam's Acceptance – verse 23

Adam totally accepted Eve. True love always involves full acceptance. Adam accepted what God gave to him without conditions. Remember that marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Adam's commitment to Eve is a picture of Christ's commitment to His church.

Leaving – leaving father & mother to cleave to his wife.
"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, ..."

Cleaving – "...*cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*".

No home moves forward when these two items are ignored. They are both extremely important.

A school teacher in the community...was asked "what are you doing here?" She said, "I don't live where it's *comfortable*, I live where it's *important* to live."

Conclusion: Are we trying to live comfortably, or is it important to you to be committed to Christ?

Moving Forward in the Church

Text: Deut. 31:6-8

Introduction: This brief passage reveals Moses speaking personally to Joshua, his successor, and collectively to the nation of Israel. It speaks to the issue before us of the church moving forward. We have all heard the statement, "*You are either standing still, falling behind, or going forward*". This is certainly true concerning the church.

The Church A **Body** of Baptized Believers

The Church A **Building** built by Christ Himself

The Church A **Bride** Waiting for her Coming Bridegroom

Let's not be too critical of the Church - Much is **RIGHT** with the Church:

- Built on the Right **Person**
- Based on the Right **Principles**
- Backed by the Right **Power**
- Beloved by the Right **People**

*I think that I shall never see
A church that's all it ought to be:
A church whose members never stray
Beyond the strait and narrow way;
A church that has no empty pews,
Whose pastor never has the blues,
A church whose deacons always deak,
And none is proud, and all are meek;
Where gossips never peddle lies,
Or make complaints or criticize;
Where all are always sweet and kind,
And all to others' faults are blind.*

*Such perfect churches there may be,
But none of them are known to me.
But still, we'll work, and pray, and plan
To make our own the best we can.*

Look how the Church has changed over the years.....The statistics are alarming:

The Condition of the Church in America:

- 1,400 pastors in America leave the ministry monthly.
- Only 15% of churches in the United States are growing and just 2.2% of those are growing by conversion growth.
- 10,000 churches in America disappeared in a five-year period.
- Only 45% of the U.S. population attends church regularly.
- Number of people in America that don't attend church has doubled in the past 15 yrs.
- No more than 38% of the population attends church at all and that's in the Bible belt. The next highest is the Midwest at 25%, West 21% and the Northeast 17%.
- Though the Bible Belt still boasts the highest percentage of church attendees, many of those churches are filled with legalism or extreme liberalism.
- The vast majority of churches have an attendance of less than 75.
- There are almost 100 million un-churched Americans, 11-20% of them claim to be born-again. They have either left the church or never connected for some reason.
- The median adult attendance per church service is about 90 people, which is slightly below the 1998 average of 95 adult attendees and in 1997 it was 102. There seems to be a slight gradual decline.
- Only 1/5 of the adult population attends Sunday school or some sort of Christian training.

- Only 65% of Americans donate to a place of worship. Of Evangelicals, however, 85% donate to their church, yet only 9% tithe.
- Only 20-25% read their Bible consistently, 59% attend church weekly, 16% listen to Christian radio, 7% watch Christian TV, and 11% are held accountable to someone.
- Only 60% of Christians say they are deeply committed to their faith, yet 85% of evangelicals make this claim.
- Only one in four (25%) have a place in the church where they serve.
- Less than 50% say that the Bible is totally accurate, yet 60% of those that claim to be born-again.
- Just 1/3 of church attendees believe that they have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others.
- 56% of the population believes that salvation can be earned and shockingly, 26% are among evangelical churches.
- Giving to charities increased in the past decade yet giving to local churches is declining.
- 1 out of 4 church attendees are considered church hoppers.

As you can see, the church as a whole is in a mess, and it is a long way from what it was at its beginning.

3 Things To Help the Church Move Forward:

1-Conduct - Vs. 6 Involving:

- Consistent Living
- Concern for Others
- Concentration on what we have, not what we don't have

2-Commission - Vs. 7

- Personally to Joshua
- Collectively to Israel as a people
- Challenges to Accept
- Enemies to Defeat
- Dangers to Avoid
- Opportunities to Take
- Attitudes to Develop

3-Companion - Vs. 8

"...the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee..."

Conclusion: In one of the early towns of the old west a young preacher, in obedience to God traveled to the town, rented a public facility and began a protracted meeting. This was a name the old timers called a revival meeting. Well, revival broke out. It was so thorough a meeting, the local saloon closed, which was converted into the new building to house the church that was born out of the revival. How God blessed! Souls were saved regularly and lives changed. The building was teeming with the excitement that only God can give.

Then a spirit of mediocrity began to settle over the congregation. So, the pastor began to plead with the people from Proverbs 29:11. He became so earnest in his bequest, that he even made beautiful wooden letters and nailed them to a wooden plaque. The large, easy to read sign was placed over the door of the church. As the people exited they could not help but see the sign which read: "*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*" The pastor continued to plead with the people to have a vision, reminding them every week of the words of the sign. The days passed by without the least show of interest. Finally, God led the preacher on to a

place where he believed he was usable, a place where he was allowed to lead the flock to follow the Lord. He never forgot the place of his early experience, the great revival and the close friendships encountered.

One day the preacher was visiting the town and entered the building that used to house the church. It was now obsolete. No church met in the town. He walked into the building and remembered where each and every family sat. His heart was getting heavy as he reminisced those grand old days. The preacher walked into the pulpit, now covered with dust. He remembered how he used to preach his heart out at that very spot. Then he audibly began to raise his voice and cry, "Why, God, why?" The Lord answered his prayer immediately.

Those words no sooner came out of his mouth, when he focused on the sign he had constructed those many years ago, "Where there is no vision the people perish." The sign was in perfect condition except the "w" on where had fallen away and it now read, "*here there is no vision the people perish.*" A sad but true commentary on what had happened in that church in the old western town. May it never be so with us; therefore, let us have a vision from God, allowing Him to accomplish His purposes in our lives!

Moving Forward In Life

Text: Deuteronomy 31:6-8

Introduction: In our text, Moses is getting ready to pass off the scene. He is turning over the leadership of Israel to Joshua and challenging him to move forward in life. There are many issues confronting our churches and families. The only way to solve them is by moving forward under God's direction. The example of Joshua gives some key lessons to help us as we move forward in life:

Joshua's Conduct - *"Be strong and of a good courage... fear not, neither be dismayed."* Moving forward requires a Christian's character to be right.

- A. We are to *"...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."* Ephesians 6:10
- B. We are to be of good courage. Psalm 27:14
- C. We are not to fear. Psalm 27:1-6

Joshua's Commission - *"...for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it."*

- A. Our commission Matthew. 28:19-20
- B. Our responsibility 1 Pet. 3:15

Joshua's Companion - *"And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee..."*

Conclusion: When we move forward in life under God's direction, we do not lack His active presence or help. Hebrews 13:5, Isaiah 41:10

Moving Forward Toward The Rapture

Text - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction: In our text we have a classic passage on the rapture of the church. Sorrow had come to the lives of these believers and they were in doubt as to their deceased loved ones' should the Lord return. The Apostle Paul assures them that their dead will be raised first, and that all believers will be gathered together to meet the Lord in the air.

These Thessalonian Christians had evidently heard about the coming of the Lord. But, they thought that believers had to be alive until the coming of the Lord or they would somehow miss the resurrection and the rapture. They thought their departed loved ones, who had died and been buried, were gone forever. Paul writes to them to let them know there is something to look forward to for those who have gone on to be with Jesus. In these verses, Paul speaks about those who have left earth for Heaven, he gives us all encouragement to move forward toward the rapture.

1. The Rapture Is A Secret

1 Corinthians 15:51 *Behold, I shew you a mystery; ...*

2. The Rapture Is Sweet

1 Thessalonians 4:18 *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Titus 2:13 *Looking for that blessed hope, ..."*

The term "blessed" means joyful or happy. The Rapture is "that BLESSED hope."

3. The Rapture Is Selective

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

4. The Rapture Is Sudden

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

The Rapture involves:

I. The Redeemer Who is Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:16 *"For the Lord himself ..."*

II. The Resurrection of the Dead in Christ

1 Thess. 4:16 *"...and the dead in Christ shall rise first:"*

III. The Rapture of the Living in Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:17 *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up ..."*

IV. The Reunion With Loved Ones in Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:17 "... caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

V. The Rest for All Believers in Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 "... and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

VI. The Receiving of Reward For Faithfulness to Christ

Crowns will be given for:

1 - Crown Of Righteousness— Love The Lord's Appearing
- 2 Tim 4:8

2 - Incorruptible Crown— Disciplined Bodies / Self-Control - 1 Cor. 9:25-27

3 - Crown Of Life— Endured Patiently Thru Trials - James 1:12, Rev 2:10

4 - Crown Of Glory— Godly Leaders Who Were Examples To Flock - 1 Pet 5:2-4

5 - Crown Of Rejoicing— Soul Winners Crown - 1 Thess. 2:19, Dan 12:3

When Jesus comes, we are going home! When Jesus comes all the pain, sorrow, separation, suffering, sin, and heartache will end immediately. When Jesus comes, we will leave this world behind and fly away to a better place to spend eternity with Him and all those He redeemed when He died on Calvary. When Jesus comes we will be caught up, carried away and completely changed! Let's say with John, "*Even so, come Lord Jesus!*"

Moving Forward After Failure

Introduction: Listen to the following chronology of a man's life whom you all know well. Now take note to see if he ever failed at anything:

Age 22 – he failed in business

Age 23 – he ran for legislature and was defeated

Age 24 – he failed again in business

Age 26 – his sweetheart died

Age 27 – he had a nervous breakdown

Age 29 – he was defeated for speaker

Age 31 – he was defeated for elector

Age 34 – he was defeated for Congress

Age 37 – he was elected to Congress

Age 39 – he was defeated for Congress

Age 46 – he was defeated for Senate

Age 47 – he was defeated for vice president

Age 49 – he was defeated for Senate

Age 51 – he was elected president of the United States

This is the record of Abraham Lincoln. Throughout his life he suffered many more defeats than victories, but because he never gave up he won the highest office of the land.

The key to moving forward after failure is to not give up in the face of it, to keep going in the midst of it, and to be patient until the end of it. Listen to the following Scripture.....

Three Truths From Three Texts:

1. If You Want To Move Forward Then Don't Give Up!

Galatians 6:9 *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

The battle is not to lose heart. Keep your heart full of faith and love. Don't be discouraged and quit. If you do not quit – ultimately—you will not fail!

2. If You Want To Move Forward Keep Going

James 5:7-8 *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

Notice that word “patient”. James has talked already about patience in the opening chapter. He said in chapter 1, verse 3, “...*the trying of your faith worketh **patience**.*”

The word here literally means “*long-tempered*”. We might say “*longsuffering*”.

The thought is a calm control over ones temper or spirit. James illustrates it in our text in verse 7, with the picture of a *husbandman* (farmer).

He says, “*Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*”

There was very little rain in Palestine. In fact, there were two main rainfalls during the year – the early and late (*latter*) rain. One prepared the ground for planting. The other prepared the crops for harvest.

To paraphrase James, we might say, “No matter how eager or anxious the farmer is to get his crop, he has to wait while continuing the process of planting, watering, and working before he can get the reward of his field.”

In much the same way, God doesn’t save us and then instantly take us home to heaven. There is a process that may be hard, but it is nonetheless valuable. Therefore, we must be long-suffering, patiently resolved that we are going to be doing and keep going until the Lord returns.

A few years ago, during a Monday Night Football game, an announcer made the point that Hall of Fame Bears running back Walter Payton had accumulated over 9 miles of rushing yards over his career. The other commentator added, “Yeah, and that’s with someone knocking him down every 4.6 yards.”

James teaches us that no matter how often you get knocked down, you can keep going and doing if you make your mind up to do it. Being patient means you are willing to keep

going and doing what you need to do regardless of circumstances or how you feel.

God's Word calls us to be patient till the Lord returns and straightens everything out. There are times when the waiting stops and the breakthrough comes but even then, we are to wait until the Lord shows us and does what needs to be done. If we rush to fix and control everything, we usually are just setting ourselves up for another failure more waiting.

Notice what we are to do while we wait— "*stablish*," our word today is establish our hearts! Mark that word "*stablish*". It is translated from a word that means to set something firmly, or to fix it in place. Unfortunately, our day is one of indecisive, flip-flop, wishy-washy, up and down, in and out, flaky, weak-kneed Christians.

Oh, how we need to let God firmly set and fix in place our hearts while we wait, then the wait is not wasted.

3. If You Want To Move Forward Patiently Endure

Hebrews 6:15 *And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

All of us have to endure things. We have no choice. There are things we face that we did not ask for and cannot change.

But the key is to *patiently endure*. This means that we are not to become bitter, grumble and complain, we do not choose to go into sin because our answer has not come. We position ourselves on the promise of God and keep doing the right things patiently waiting on God to take care of the rest.

Think of what *impatient* endurance looks like. When you are waiting to see the doctor? When you are waiting in the checkout line at the grocery store? When you are waiting for the road crew working on the road? When you are sitting at a red light? Let's take it deeper.... When you are waiting on a prodigal son to come home? When you are waiting on the boss to give you a raise? When you are waiting on the report from the biopsy? When you are waiting on God to bring you a mate? You are waiting on revival to come to the church? Are you *patiently* or *impatiently* enduring?

Far too often we choose to endure our trials the wrong way. We become *bitter or better* depending on choosing to endure versus *patiently* enduring. Remember patience is a fruit of the Spirit, so be led by the Spirit. Surrender your life to the Lord and follow Him faithfully. Keep your head and heart in the right place and end up in the right place and the right time moving forward in spite of failure.

Conclusion: The Bible is filled with people who failed and then moved forward. They refused to quit. They got back up and kept trusting God through their own personal failures, through the mistreatments, the persecution, the setbacks. They kept going!

Remember, we ALL fail. Many times the obstacles placed in our path overwhelm us and defeat us, other times we just don't apply ourselves for whatever the reason is. How we respond to failure will determine our ultimate success, or lack of success. Winston Churchill said, "*Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.*" When we refuse to quit, keep doing the right things, and trust that our loving Father will bring to pass what He was promised. We can move forward after failure!

Moving Forward: A Graduation Message

-A High School Graduation Message-

Introduction: Graduation is an assorted bag of enthusiasm over *what has been* accomplished in your life and the anticipation of *what lies ahead*.

Graduates:

- You have been in school now for 2160 days.
- You have spent 15,120 hours in classes.
- That translates into 907,200 minutes.
- So far you've lived approximately 18 years.
- You've been around 216 months.
- You have been breathing 936 weeks.
- You've been going through the motions for 6,552 days
- You've been here 157,248 hours.
- You've been taking up space 9,434,880 minutes.
- You've slept 52,500 hours.
- You've spent 7,488 hours eating. (Mostly pizza!)

Exodus 14:15 “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they **go forward**:*”

Moses had finally *graduated* from being a shepherd on the back side of the desert to being the emancipator of the nation of Israel.

The children of Israel had *graduated* from the bondage they were under in Egypt to now being a free people for the first time in their lives.

The Question For Both Was, “*Where Do We Go From Here?*”

From here, many directions can be taken...Backward, Upward, Downward, Sideways....**but the best choice is always FORWARD!**

God’s message for Moses and Israel was, “Go forward!”

There will be obstacles, troubles, and trials, but “**Go forward!**”

There will be defeats and victories, but “**Go forward!**”

There will be burdens and blessings, but “**Go forward!**”

There will be things that life has for you, good and bad, but “**Go forward!**”

Upon graduation, you will get your diploma.

But getting your diploma is just a small part of the package, what you do with it after you get it is another thing all together. What will you do with it? Use it as a stepping-stone and not the end of the road.

Much more awaits you as you set goals, accomplish them, and achieve success.

Enjoy this time in life, pray for God’s guidance, listen to godly counsel, obey His Word, but “**Go forward!**”

Three Thoughts:

The real estate term "*location, location, location*" has been around for decades and is still very popular. This phrase is to remind people that the most determining factor in the price of a house is the location.:

1-Location.....Know where you are

Two friends from New York City were traveling, taking in sites down south. While driving through Georgia, they were often boggled by the place names, which peaked as they were approaching our small town of Ludowici.

The two men started arguing about the pronunciation of Ludowici. They argued back and forth until they decided to stop and go into a place where they knew they could settle their argument as to how Ludowici was pronounced by.

When it was their turn the man asked the young lady behind the counter, "Before we order, could you please settle an argument for us? Would you please pronounce where we are -- very slowly?"

"Sure," said the girl. She leaned over the counter and said, "Dairy Queen."

2-Location.....Decide where you want to be

Set some goals for your life, what you want to do, where you want to go, what you want to be: "*Sincere goals are great - as long as God is included!*"

Phil 3:14 "*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"

God allows us to take part in setting goals but all of *our* goals may not be *His* goals, but set some anyway. Set your goals high, even if you do not reach them. For in so doing you will still climb higher than you would have without having set them.

Just before giving a lavish party at his estate, a rich tycoon had his swimming pool filled with poisonous snakes.

He called the guests together and announced, "To anyone brave enough to swim across this pool, I will give the choice of a thousand acres of my oil fields, or 10,000 head of cattle, or my daughter's hand in marriage." No sooner were his words spoken than a young man plunged in, swam across the pool and climbed out--unscathed but breathless.

"Congratulations!" the tycoon greeted him. "Do you want my oil fields?" "No!" gasped the guest. "The 10,000 head of cattle?" "No!" the young man shouted. "Well, how about my daughter's--" "No!" "You must want something," said the puzzled host.

"I just want the name of the guy who pushed me in!"

3-Location.....Both Human & Divine

You still need others! Where are you in relation to those in your life that have helped you?

Luke 6:38 *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

You still need the Lord! Where are you in relation to the Lord who wants you to trust Him?

Philippians 4:19 *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

David Livingston was one of the greatest missionaries this world has ever known. He was famous for many things, and one of them was this quote that I have written down and keep in my office and read it on a regular basis, “*I shall go anywhere provided it’s forward.*” By the grace of God, graduates, let me challenge you, if you go anywhere, go forward.

Moving Forward: The Example of Israel

Text - Psalms 78: 35-42

Introduction: In this psalm the author gathers up a wealth of historical facts to show that in spite of the foolishness, falseness, and disobedience of God's people the Lord still loved them, patiently watched over, and provided for them. It actually tells us that the poor weak human beings *limited* the great God of the Universe. Is that possible? How could it be? Surely there must be something here that we don't comprehend at our first look.

Let's look into the background and context of this Psalm. The entire Psalm is a description of the children of Israel as they left the land of Egypt and traveled into the dry hot barren wilderness of Sinai. Behind them was Egypt where they had been slaves; but behind them was also the food supply and the water. It was worse than they had expected in the desert. They quickly grew faint and discouraged. Their hearts turned back to the land of Egypt where they, at least, had the necessities to keep alive. Now it seemed that they would perish; so they began to murmur and complain against Moses, and even against God.

The Bible says they tempted God, and *limited* the Holy One of Israel. In spite of their miraculous deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh, they doubted that God was with them, and that He would take care of them. And the Bible says that this lack of faith *limited* God in what He wanted to do for them.

This account is recorded particularly for our benefit and our warning! Note the indictment against them in the following verses: v8, 11, 17-18, 22, 32, 36-37, and 40. Now, note verse 41: "*Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the*

Holy One of Israel." Can God be limited by man? Yes! There are three main things to consider from this verse:

1. God wants to do great things for and through His people.

2. God is prevented from proving His capability because often we will not let Him.

Notice how Israel *limited* God and how we limit Him too:

- Doubting Faith
- Discouraging Talk
- Deliberate Sin
- Destructive Behavior

Don't Think "Difficult" means "Don't"

Mark 2: 1-12 (Healing of the Paralytic Man)

- This man would never have been saved and healed if someone hadn't decided to overcome the difficulties.

Matthew 14: 22-33 (Peter's Walking on the Water)

- Peter attempted that which no one else did
- He enjoyed limited success
- He had a desire
- God honored it
- Peter will always be remembered for this act of faith

Moving Forward With the Right Attitude

Text - Philippians 3:12-14

Introduction: I read a simple banner in a school classroom that said, "*Attitude: The Little Thing That Makes A Big Difference*". Having the right attitude makes all the difference in the world for any Christian.

Some years ago there was this survey done by *Harvard University* which interviewed several thousand managers or owners of businesses and asked them what the one thing was that they looked for when they interviewed someone for a job or a new position. The one thing that nearly 96% said that they looked for was not, academics, it was "*attitude*".

Fortune magazine interviewed 500 of the most wealthy men in the world and asked them why they thought that they were so successful in their business and 99% said "*attitude*".

The fact is that we will move into the future regardless of how we prepare for it. There are:

- Challenges we must accept
- Enemies we must defeat
- Dangers we must avoid
- Opportunities to take

But the one essential factor in moving forward is ***Attitude!***

In this message I want to share some Biblical truths about the importance of attitude and how it can help us accomplish God's will in "*Moving Forward.*"

Attitude Defined

A person's prevailing tendency to respond favorable or unfavorably to an object, a person, a group, or an event

Normally, we speak either of positive or negative attitudes. Practically, it is how we think or feel about things. They are formed by what we believe to be true about things.

Attitudes are expressed in several ways:

- In our facial expressions
- In our tone of voice / inflection
- In our behavior or lack of it
- In the way we execute a task
- In the energy we put into whatever we are doing
- In the interest we have in a person, thing or activity

Ask yourself, "How am I expressing my faith?"

I read this just recently about the late General Douglas McArthur. He wrote something very profound about aging on his 75th birthday: *"In the central place of every heart there is a recording chamber; as long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, and courage, you are young. When the wires are all down and your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then, and then only are you grown old."*

Here is a very revealing illustration about attitude: *"Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses all the time?"* asked a small boy of his playmate. *"No-o-o,"* the other boy answered slowly, *"not if I had the kind grandma wears. She sees how to fix a lot of things, see lots of nice things to do on rainy days, and sees when folks are tired and sad, and what will make them feel*

better, and she always sees what you meant to do even if you haven't got things just right. I asked her one day how she could see that way all the time, and she said it was the way she learned to look at things as she grew older. So it must be her glasses."

The power of attitude is seen in the fact that it reveals what we believe, what we are, what we will do, what we will sacrifice, how hard we will work, and how much of ourselves we will give to anything. There can be no doubt that attitude is a great determining factor of success

What Does The Bible Say About Attitudes?

Our English word "*attitude*" is translated in the Bible several ways: *mind*, *countenance*, and *heart*. Attitude is a very graphic word that gives insight into how a person thinks or feels about something or someone. Note the following Biblical examples:

- **Ezra 7:10** *For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Nehemiah 4:6 ... attitude of work*
- **Nehemiah 4:17** *They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.*
- **Psalms 119:97-104** *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have*

refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

- **Philippians 2:5-8** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*
- **Acts 5:41** *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*
- **Ephesians 4:22-23** *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;*
- **1 Peter 4:1** *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*

It is evident that God's word recognizes the value of attitude, and either commends or condemns people for the result of attitude in their lives.

Attitudes For The Future Of The Lord's Church

A positive attitude toward God, Mark 12:30, will make a difference in how interested you are in the Lord, and doing what He commands. It will shape your willingness to seek

for spiritual growth. It will determine the moral climate you decide to live in.

A positive attitude toward the church, 2 Corinthians 11:28 and Hebrews 10:25, will promote, encourage, and let people know about your church.

This involves several different things: Loving the people in the church, 1 John 3:16-18...Actively supporting the work of the church...Your level of involvement with the church, Matthew 6:33...Your attendance reveals your attitude as well...Bringing visitors to the assemblies...Participating in the worship

A Positive Attitude About Being Separate From The World 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. This is the difference between leading others to Christ or being led away from Christ...

A Positive Attitude About Life, Romans 8:28,...this is the difference between conquering the problems in life and being conquered by them

Conclusion: You cannot keep an attitude a secret. You will show it in your countenance, your tone of voice, and your actions. You will show it in how much you are for or against something – your attitude will show through to others. If you are going to move into the future and do all that God wants us to do, then you must have a good attitude – the *right* attitude!

Are You Moving Forward With The Right Attitude?

