

## SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

Joshua 1:1-9

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Paul enumerates the many difficulties he suffered as he preached the gospel: Paul enumerates some 24 aspects of trials, tribulations and persecutions.
  - A. For the most part I find it a bit difficult to fully relate to Paul's troubles because I have not suffered for the sake of the gospel like he did.
    - (1) There were a few nasty letters to the editor written about me in Michigan.
    - (2) And, I received about a half dozen nasty personal letters (unsigned, no return address), but my physical health was never in danger.
  - B. However, I can relate to some degree when Paul said (vs. 28): "*besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*"
    - (1) I have a deep concern for the state of the church, in general, today as I see memberships of so many congregations dwindling and the level of spiritual development of so many not where it should be (even some in this congregation!).
    - (2) My greatest desire for each and every one of you is that you achieve spiritual success.
2. **3** Therefore, the text for our lesson is Josh. 1:1-9 (read).
  - A. In these verses God is giving encouragement to Joshua as he prepares to lead the children of Israel across the Jordan River to conquer Canaan.
  - B. As the leader of God's people, Israel; the Lord knew that Joshua was in for the greatest challenge of his life (An even greater challenge than 40 years earlier as one of the 12 spies!).
  - C. In His speech to Joshua the LORD gives seven rules for spiritual success.
  - D. It is my most earnest hope and prayer that each of us will understand these seven rules for spiritual success, meditate upon them, and put them into practice in our lives.

### I. DISCUSSION:

**The first rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

1. **4** "**be strong**" (vs. 7)
  - A. It is critical for God's people to be strong:
    - (1) Because Satan is on the prowl! **1 Pet. 5:8**: "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*"; **the Devil knows no fear!** **Lk. 4:12**: "*And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"; cf. Matt. 4:1-11*
    - (2) Therefore, we need to be strong! **1 Cor. 16:13**: "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*" Many are spiritual "pantywaists" (i.e., pansy, wuss, whimps).
    - (3) We don't become spiritually strong by accident! Rom. 10:17  
**2 Pet. 1:3-5**: "*as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...*[knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love]... **2 Pet. 1:8-12**: "*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he*

who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.”; cf. Heb. 10:24-25

**2 Pet. 3:17-18:** “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

B. For us to “be strong” we must take Paul’s admonition in Ephesians 6:10-18 seriously

**Eph. 6:10-13:** “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

C. Do you ever stop and consider just how worthless we are to the Lord and to His cause when we are spiritual whimps?!

### **The second rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

2. \*\* “be...very courageous” (vs. 7)

A. We are to exercise diligence to add this to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5; virtue = arête, moral excellence, or moral courage. Is derived from word expressing the strength of the male; manliness, valor).

B. Courage is greatly lacking among many of God’s people:

(1) Paul had to deal with “spiritual cowards” (**2 Tim. 4:16:** “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.”).

(2) The truth is constantly under attack and must be defended! **Jude 3:** “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

(3) We can’t sit idly on the sidelines and say nothing, do nothing! **Eph. 5:11:** “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

“The only thing evil men need to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” Edmond Burke

(4) If you and this church have never been challenged by false teaching...GREAT! But I can guarantee you that at some point in the future such a challenge will come! Will you be up to “contending earnestly for the faith”?!

C. Christians must exhibit the courage of a soldier (**2 Tim. 2:3:** “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”).

D. It would do us all well to recall and imitate the example of Daniel and his three friends (**Dan. 3:16-18:** “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”); **Dan. 6:7, 10:** “All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the

den of lions. ... 10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.”).

### **The third rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

3. \*\* “observe to do according to all the law” (vs. 7): i.e., obedient
  - A. We must always submit ourselves to Christ’s authority (Matt. 28:19-20; **Matt. 7:21-27**).
    - (1) We must never forget who Jesus really is (Jn. 1:3; Heb. 11:3).
    - (2) It takes real hutzpah to challenge Christ’s authority (Col. 3:17).
  - B. It would do us all well to recall and imitate the example of Cornelius (**Acts 10:33**: “So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”).
  - C. We must have a fervent desire to:
    - (1) Know the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27; 17:11).
    - (2) If you personally don’t have a program of regular Bible reading, meditation and prayer; you are asking for big trouble! 2 Tim. 2:15 (**Psa. 119:97**: “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”; 1 Thess. 5:17)
    - (3) We must submit ourselves to **all** God’s commands; not just the ones we find convenient (no cafeteria-style religion! Jer. 10:23; but 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Jn. 2:3-5; 5:3).

**Jn. 8:31**: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”

**Jn. 15:14**: “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”

### **The fourth rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

4. **5** “do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left...observe to do according to all that is written in it” (vss. 7 & 8)
  - A. Many do not fully respect God’s word (individually or congregationally):

**Matt. 7:21-23**: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”).
  - B. We must always respect and follow His word **exactly!** (“eck-zuntly”)

**Deut. 4:2**: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”; Rev. 22:18-19

**Prov. 30:6**: “Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”
  - C. Don’t make excuses for ourselves or others (Some believe it is not “PC” to criticize false teaching): **Isa. 8:20**: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (enemy of the truth!); 1 Pet. 4:11
  - D. I beseech you with all my heart that you never allow anyone to teach or preach here at Westside that does not have this kind of respect for God’s word!

**2 Jn. 9-11**: “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” (church at Pergamos had those who taught “the doctrine of Balaam”;

therefore, they were in danger! **Rev. 2:16:** “Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.”).

### **The fifth rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

#### **5. \*\* “you shall meditate in it day and night” (vs. 8)**

- A. It’s so easy to not meditate on God’s word in this fast-paced, 20-second sound-bite, world we live in! (smart phones)
- B. But, meditating on God’s word is a must!

#### **Psa. 1:1-6:**

“Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the  
ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
2 But his delight is in the law of the  
LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and  
night.  
3 He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.  
4 The ungodly are not so,  
But are like the chaff which the wind  
drives away.  
5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in  
the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the  
righteous.  
6 For the LORD knows the way of the  
righteous,

*But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”*

#### **Psa. 119:97-104:**

97 Oh, how I love Your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.  
98 You, through Your commandments,  
make me wiser than my enemies;  
For they are ever with me.  
99 I have more understanding than all my  
teachers,  
For Your testimonies are my meditation.  
100 I understand more than the ancients,  
Because I keep Your precepts.  
101 I have restrained my feet from every  
evil way,  
That I may keep Your word.  
102 I have not departed from Your  
judgments,  
For You Yourself have taught me.  
103 How sweet are Your words to my  
taste,  
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
104 Through Your precepts I get  
understanding;  
Therefore I hate every false way.”

- C. But, we can’t meditate on God’s word unless:

(1) We know it! 2 Tim. 2:15

(2) We consciously strive to set aside time to meditate! **Psa. 119:97:** “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”; **Psa. 119:15-16:** “I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. 16 I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.” (laminated card)

- D. Why is it so important? 1 Cor. 10:13; Matt. 4:1-11

### **The sixth rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

#### **6. \*\* “do not be afraid” (vs. 9)**

- A. Fear is the excuse many use for not doing as they should: **Matt. 25:25-26:** “And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ 26 But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant,’”

- (1) Fear can paralyze us! **Jas. 4:17:** “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”
  - (2) Fear can cost us our soul! **Rev. 21:8:** “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” The Lord’s army has no positions for spiritual cowards!
- B. We need not fear anything except God: **Matt. 10:28:** “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- Heb. 12:29:** “For our God is a consuming fire.”
- Heb. 10:31:** “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”
- Heb. 13:5b-6:** “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ 6 So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”
- C. Abiding in Christ is the only way to overcome fear:
- 1 Jn. 2:28:** “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”
- Jn. 15:10:** “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

**The seventh rule for spiritual success given by the Lord is...**

**7. 6 “nor be dismayed” (vs. 9)**

- A. It is easy to become discouraged:
  - (1) Sin’s presence is depressing: **1 Jn. 5:19:** “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”
  - 2 Pet. 2:7-8:** “and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)”
  - (2) Sometimes we feel that for every step forward we make (spiritually) we take two backward: **Rom. 7:19:** “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”
  - (3) We must be on guard not to give up! **Gal. 6:9:** “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart..”
- B. God is always at hand to encourage us (**Isa. 41:10:** “Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”; **Eph. 3:20:** “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”).
- C. The Lord does not judge our work using human standards (**1 Cor. 15:58:** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”; **1 Cor. 3:7-9; 2 Cor. 12:15:** “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls...”).
- D. BTW: Do you know what is a **MAJOR** source of discouragement for many? **Heb. 10:24:25:** “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

### III. CONCLUSION: 7

1. If we will follow these seven rules, we will reap spiritual success:

① **Be strong**

② **Very courageous**

③ **Obedience**

④ **Don't turn**

⑤ **Meditate**

⑥ **No fear**

⑦ **Not dismayed**

2. \*\* If we diligently seek spiritual success the Lord guarantees:

Vs. 5: "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life"

Vs. 5: "I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you"

Vs. 8: "will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"

Vs. 9: "the LORD your God is with you wherever you go"

3. The question we need to ask, and answer is this: "Do we really want to achieve spiritual success?"

4. 8 I leave you with these words:

"Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

"For what are you preparing?"

"You can die with serenity only if you live for eternity."

"The world will not persecute a worldly Christian."

Adapted from a sermon by Johnie Edwards entitled *Spiritual Success*, in *Gospel Sermons by Three Generations of Gospel Preachers*, Edwards Publishing, 1997, pp. 195-196.