

Embracing Your Tomorrow

PART ONE

Joshua 1:1-5

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Let's face it ... life is lived on a continual series of ups and downs. One morning you wake up and find that you have the tiger by the tail and life is good. Everything is going your way and you are enjoying the sweet taste of success. You are climbing to the top and you have successfully conquered every challenge that has been presented to you. Then, out of the blue, something changes. You are now running from the tiger whose tail you have been pulling. Everything has started to go wrong and you see you are about to hit the bottom. You find yourself living in a fog of doubt and uncertainty.

We have all been impacted by shifting circumstances, unstable relationships, unreliable health, economic downturns, and dying dreams; this is just to mention a few. We can all look back on disappointing and heartbreaking things we have faced in the past. We can see that life didn't turn out the way we had planned, or the way that it was supposed to turn out. Tragically, many people allow their disappointments and heartaches to set boundaries on their hopes for tomorrow. Crippled by their past, they fear being let down and disappointed in the future. They end up adopting the attitude, "it never works out for me", and shy away from moving forward.

The Past is Over

Joshua lived a significant portion of his life in a shadow. This was not a shadow of failure or disappointment; instead, he lived in the shadow of a great personality, Moses. People from our past can still reach out to us and impact how we think and act. Whether they were a positive or a negative influence on us, they often dictate our present steps.

God informed Joshua that Moses is dead; *After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel"* (Joshua 1:1-2). This announcement was far more than an obituary announcement. God was letting Joshua know that his predecessor, and anything about his leadership that may have been intimidating to him in the past, was dead. Please understand God was not making a negative statement about Moses to Joshua. Moses had never done anything negative to Joshua. God was simply stating a fact that Joshua needed to fully understand.

This raises an obvious question since Joshua already knew that Moses was dead. Why would God bother telling Joshua something that he obviously already knew? Even though Joshua was an outstanding leader in his own right, following in the footsteps of a giant of a leader like Moses could prove to be intimidating and restrictive. In order for Joshua to embrace his God-appointed tomorrows of leadership over the Israelites, he needed to be reassured that the past was over and dead.

We need this same application applied to our hearts. Whatever, or whoever, has shaped our lives up to this moment does not have any claim on where God wants to take us from here. Whatever has intimidated us, caused us problems, or been disappointing to us in the past, is DEAD! You might be saying ... “Pastor, why would you say such a thing? How can you be so sure my past is dead?” I am confident that our past is dead because of the dynamics of the Cross of Calvary. As a matter of fact, the death of our past is what Calvary is all about. Not only were our sins nailed to the Cross; but all that restricts us, all that intimidates us, and all that disappoints us, is nailed there as well. Everything that would keep us from embracing our God-appointed tomorrows has been nailed to the Cross. The purpose for nailing anything to a cross is to make sure it dies there!

The Starting Place for Moving Forward

The starting place for embracing our God-appointed tomorrows is to acknowledge the dead things of yesterday. Everything painful; everything intimidating; everything restrictive; and everything disappointing is dead because of Calvary!

However, it is also true that everything that was glorious and good, but which has served its purpose in our lives, is dead. Tragically, many Christians never seem to let go of a great spiritual season in their past. They seek ways relive it over and over again. They measure everything in their today by yesterday’s standards, methods, emotions and events. They want everything in their today to look; act; feel; and sound like everything in their yesterdays. Tragically, they are never able to move forward with God into a new spiritual adventure. They are always looking back at a season that has served its purpose and is past.

We all need to realize that everything in our past, whether good or bad, has served its purpose and is dead! We now need to set our hearts on a new spiritual journey and adventure into all that God has purposed for us.

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The Lord settled the fact of Moses’ death with Joshua. He then informs Joshua that all of his tomorrows have already been provided for; “*Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses*” (Joshua 1:3). Notice the words in this verse that are in the past tense ... “*I have given you.*” God was not telling Joshua he would be marking out the boundaries of what God would like to give him. God was telling Joshua that He had already marked out the boundaries of what He intended to give to him. In other words, God was saying to Joshua, “Joshua, I have appointed and purposed the very ground upon which you will be walking to become the inheritance of My people, Israel. By faith, walk into the land and embrace what I have purposed for you!” Notice, all that Joshua had to do was to believe God ... move forward ... and take possession of what God had promised, and had already given to him.

When God is ready to do something new in our lives, it is up to us to make some choices. Honestly ask yourself the following questions:

- Will I possess the full dimensions of what God has promised to me, or will I be satisfied with just a little corner of what has been promised and purposed for my life?
- Will I be open to the possibilities that the Lord has greater plans and broader horizons for my life, or will I choose to live in the shadows of my past?
- Will my tomorrows unfold before me, or will they simply fade away because I refuse to move forward for fear of being disappointed again?

These are questions that we all face when it comes to dealing with our past. When we have been disappointed in the past, it can prevent us from wanting to move forward into anything new. Regardless of how much promise the future may appear to hold for us, we simply will not budge. We would rather try to hold on to what we have instead of risking our hearts in trying something new.

Let's take a moment and do some soul searching together ... be as honest as possible. Just as it was with Joshua, everything rides on the answers we give. Let's examine where we are today and what we need to do to move forward into our God-appointed tomorrows with hope and expectation.

Who or what in your past is dictating your actions and/or controlling your thoughts in the present? Take a moment and collect everything and everyone that has intimidated you; hurt you; restricted you; or disappointed you. Now, add to this collection everything and everyone that has been a blessing to you in the past, but whose season is over, and their purpose for being in your life has been served.

Now, let's use our imaginations and walk up Mount Calvary together. Let's stand at the foot of our Lord's Cross and nail our collections of the good and the bad in our past to the Cross ... let it DIE! Let's walk away together and resist the urge to look back at our dying past. Now, by faith, let's walk into our God-appointed tomorrows and fully embrace all that God has promised and purposed for us.

Acknowledge That Your Past Is Dead!

Realize, God has Already Purposed His Very Best for You!

Embrace Your God-Appointed Tomorrow with Hope and Expectation!