

The Call
Joshua 1:1-9
July 27, 2025

Joshua and the Israelites faced enormous challenges in their calling to take possession of the Promised Land. Reading their story can help us trust the Lord for facing the challenges of transitioning into an uncertain future and taking hold of the calling God is giving Rochester CRC.

I. The Call: Paying Attention to God's Voice

The Lord charges Joshua to lead the people of Israel to take possession of the Promised Land. This charge to take possession of the Promised Land is what the Lord wants Joshua and the people to do. It is their calling.

Each of us has a calling too, both as individuals and as a church, of what God wants us to do. This calling comes as we listen to God's voice and is the mission he is giving us. This calling isn't something we make up, or something we want to see happen. It comes from God and is what God wants us to do. Hearing God's call requires paying close attention to God and what he wants us to do in this life.

II. The Call: A Terrifying Opportunity

Three times the Lord says, *"Be strong and courageous."* The reason the Lord stated this three times was because this task of leading the people to take possession of the Promised Land was beyond Joshua's and the people's abilities. Joshua was panic-stricken by what he was being called to do. He's got to do things he's not done before.

When God calls you, he always calls you to be more than you are. God's calling never leaves you the same as you were but changes you. This change involves God's grace converting us into his faithful servants who lose their lives doing God's will in order to receive the life Jesus died to give us.

Joshua has a number of fears. How can he measure up to someone like Moses? How will he be able to take possession of Canaan with a ragtag group of fighting men? Will the people accept his leadership or will they revert back to their old ways?

These fears Joshua had were neither good nor bad. Fear is a God-given emotion that is meant to help us in living. When we are overwhelmed by life's problems or a task we are given, we should have fear. Fear rallies our physical and mental resources to help us meet the threat appropriately. That's good and healthy. The problem is when our fears keep us from becoming all that God wants us to do—when they get in the way of his calling. Then our fears become a major problem.

III. The Lord's Encouragement, *"Be strong and courageous."*

Only people who are afraid have courage. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is using the fear we feel to help overcome the difficulty we face. Courage is the ability to do things we are afraid to do!

When Joshua was feeling overwhelmed by the many problems he was facing, God was teaching Joshua how to turn his fears to his advantage. Instead of letting his fears paralyze him, Joshua discovered that they were actually a means for helping him experience more of God's grace and power in his life. They helped him focus on the Lord and deepen his relationship with the Lord which in turn, gave him the very thing he needed, courage. This is true for us too, when faced with overwhelming problems.

Two noteworthy things the Lord says that gives Joshua encouragement. The first is, *"I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you."* The Lord is reaffirming his covenant promise to be with Joshua in this calling he is giving him. This gives Joshua the hope of success which gives him the courage to act. This same hope of success is given in Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to always be with us.

The second thing the Lord says that encouraged Joshua is, *"Do not let the book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it."* The book of the Law refers to the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which are all about God's covenant relationship to Israel. It speaks about how the Lord redeemed Israel, called her out from among the nations and gave her a new identity and new life where she now belonged to the Lord. Israel is set apart as God's holy people who are to carry out God's holy purposes and be God's witnesses to the world. Meditating on that relationship day and night gave Joshua the spiritual foundation necessary to carry out the Lord's will, the courage to act.

Doing flows out from being. Doing what God calls us to do flows out of being new creations in Jesus Christ. It comes out of our redemption just like it did for Joshua and the people of Israel. This is the spiritual foundation that gives us the strength and courage to act on God's calling. Mediating upon this relationship of being God's redeemed people in Jesus Christ, shapes and defines us. It affirms our identity, who we are as God's people. As this knowledge fills us, it readies us spiritually to take up the calling God has for us.

God has a calling for Rochester CRC that will lead to a great mission and an exciting future. To discover what this mission is and the future blessings God has, we have to listen carefully to God's voice. As we do, God will impress upon us what he wants. He will make his calling clear. Will this calling stretch us? Yes, it will. Will this calling challenge us beyond what we think we can do? You can be sure of it. Will this calling force us to move beyond our comfort level? Yes, it will. And if that scares us then good. It ought to. It ought to give us some fear because God is calling us to do more than we are able and be more than we are.

But that fear doesn't have to paralyze us into inaction. That fear is a gift of God that can be turned into strength and courage when we know that the Lord Jesus Christ is with us, and when we meditate on the covenant relationship we have with God as his specially redeemed people who are his witnesses who carry out his will in this world.