

Deuteronomy 31:1-29
Stand Strong. The Lord Goes Before You.
2017-07-02

Stand strong and courageous in the faithfulness of God

We'll soon be celebrating Independence Day and the beginning of our nation. George Washington, serving as the first President of the United States, understood that many of the decisions he made and things he allowed would be setting the standards and expectations for the presidency, even long after his departure from office. Some wanted to make him king and give him the title of "His Majesty." He chose instead a more democratic title, "Mr. President." There was the desire by many to see him continue to serve in the office of President, but he instead set the precedent for serving only two terms in the office. He even insisted on walking behind his successor, John Adams, at the close of his inauguration, demonstrating the peaceful transfer of power from one President to the next. *George Washington, along with other instrumental founders of our nation, understood the sinful and fallen condition of man, and knew that a mere man could never perfectly lead, but was susceptible to snares and failures of all sorts. If all hope were placed on one man, all would be certain to be disappointed, because that man would be certain to fail and to fall.* This morning as we study, we're going to see a transfer of leadership from one leader to the next. Not only the transfer of leadership, but at a pivotal time in the history of Israel; even a time when it seems that a leadership handoff might be the very worst thing. But in this we'll see that in keeping God as the Ultimate Leader, strength and courage are found. The nation of Israel and her new leader are encouraged to **Stand strong and courageous in the faithfulness of God.** There are very important lessons for us in this as well, church. People will disappoint us and let us down, whether they be political leaders, next-door neighbors, friends or spouses, but the Lord is always faithful. From our passage this morning we'll see how we can stand strong and courageous, because the Lord is faithful to Lead, to Instruct, and to Warn.

Scripture Passage: Deuteronomy 31:1-29

The Lord Faithfully Leads (vv.1-8, 14-15, 23)

1. **vv.1-2** *"I am 120 years old today... The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan.'* - Israel had come to the end of the time of Moses' leadership. 40 years he had been leading them through their wilderness wanderings; declaring to them the word of the Lord, acting oftentimes as mediator between God and Israel, and keeping before them the hope of the land promised by a faithful God. And now his time of leading was coming to its conclusion. He was old, and, "no longer able to go out and come in." Even more than a physical limitation due to Moses' age, I believe this is a limit to Moses' leadership set by the Lord because of his disobedience at the waters of Meribah.
2. Is this a crisis? What would Israel do without Moses? It really is no crisis at all. Just read to the next verse.
3. **v.3** *"The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will..."* - Throughout these first 8 verses we read of all that the Lord would do. He will destroy the other nations, he will put Israel in possession of the land, he will faithfully be with Israel, not leaving or forsaking them.
4. **v.6** *"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God..."* - Moses addresses the nation, and tells them to be strong and courageous.
 1. **Strong and courageous** - This isn't talking about physical strength, but an inner commitment to carry out God's commands. To be strong and courageous is to be resolved to accomplish what God has spoken. Remember what Israel did when they first sent the spies into the Promised Land? **Deuteronomy 1:26-28** *"Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. And you murmured in your tents and said, 'Because the Lord hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to heaven. And besides, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.'"*
 2. Their hearts melted. Instead of looking to the faithfulness of God, and standing strong and courageous, they looked to their circumstances, they looked to the obstacles, they looked to their troubles and their own resources, and their hearts melted.
 1. **Isn't this the way it always seems to work? When we look at our problems and lose perspective of the faithfulness of God, our hearts melt.** For Israel this led to their disobedience and resulted in their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Moses reminds them of God's faithfulness in the past (v.4), and so to trust the Lord in the future. Has God been faithful to you in the past? Has he seen you through trials and storms? Have there been times that you've figured you were sunk, only to discover that the Lord was there to rescue and deliver? Have you considered your own salvation, that God's mercy and faithfulness were displayed in his redemption of you through the work of Christ? Don't turn away from difficulties, but face them, standing strong and courageous in God's faithfulness.

5. The Lord is the Ultimate Leader, but he also faithfully leads through human leaders that he appoints. **vv.7-8** Moses charges Joshua, the new leader of Israel, with the same charge as he gave to the nation. In the sight of all Israel Moses tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. The Lord will do this, the Lord will be with you, the Lord will not let go of you or abandon you.

1. Dismayed - Downhearted or shattered. **1 Samuel 17:11** *“When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.”* A sinful response caused by looking at circumstances without considering the power and promises of God.
2. Joshua would soon be facing some Goliath sized obstacles, like the walls of Jericho. But he acted on the faithfulness of God, moved forward in obedience to the command of God, and saw the power of God working to accomplish the promises of God.
3. Joshua has the greatest promise of all coming from the Lord in **v.23**, *“I will be with you.”*

Transition: Be strong and courageous in the faithfulness of God. He is faithful to lead, and to give us godly leaders. The greatest responsibility of God’s leaders is to pass along what the Lord faithfully instructs.

The Lord Faithfully Instructs (vv.9-13, 19-22)

1. **vv.9-13** Moses wrote the law and gave it to the priests, commanding them to read it at the end of every seven years, the sabbatical year, and at the time when all Israel would be gathered at the Feast of Booths.
 1. If you remember our study through the book of Nehemiah, you may remember that this is what Ezra did in **Nehemiah 8**. All the people gathered to hear the reading of the law, and from early morning until midday it says they stood and listened.
 2. First, I want to draw your attention to the importance and the blessing of the written Word. It says that Moses wrote this law and passed it along. It wasn’t just an oral law, but written and recorded. Because of this we are still benefitting today from the written Word. It’s a great blessing because we don’t have to rely on our memories to recall exactly what was spoken, it’s available for study and examination, and it’s able to be passed more easily from generation to generation. This is the second thing I want to draw your attention to here. Who was to be assembled to hear? The men, the women, the children, and the sojourner.
 3. It wasn’t only the men, but the women were also commanded to be present to hear and learn, to be instructed and grow in their theological training. The sojourner was also to be present, this being the person who was not a native Israelite but had identified with Israel. Especially relevant to us today, and to our Core Value of Strengthening the Family Unit, is the presence of the children.
2. **vv.12-13** The children were to hear and learn to fear, and the children’s children (**v.13**). This was to be passed along from generation to generation. This happened through deliberate and active training and instruction. Ezra read from early morning to midday, possibly 6 hours or more, and all the people, including children, listened.
 1. This command to hear reminds us of **Deut. 6:4** *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”*
 2. But in the hearing there was also the aim of learning to fear the Lord, to grow in reverence and awe of the might and power of God, to have a greater understanding of the holiness of God, and so live and walk in obedience to God.
 1. **2 Timothy 1:5** *“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*
 2. **2 Timothy 3:14–15** *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*
3. A pastor was once talking with a man who told him that he did not believe in giving little children any religious instruction whatsoever. His theory was that the child’s mind should not be prejudiced in any direction, but when he came to years of discretion he should be permitted to choose his religious opinions for himself. The pastor said nothing; but after a while he asked his visitor if he would like to see his garden. The man said he would, and the pastor took him out into the garden, where only weeds were growing. The man looked at the pastor in surprise, and said, “Why this is not a garden! There is nothing but weeds here!” “Well, you see,” answered the pastor, “I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden in any way, I was just giving the garden a chance to express itself and to choose its own production.”

4. Church, there is no shortage of weeds that would try to take over the minds of our children. What can we do? First, be committed to the Lord's instruction in your own life. Make a habit of reading and applying God's Word to your own life. Share with your children how God is using his Word in your own life. When you come to decisions to be made, look to God's Word for direction and answers. Also, don't underestimate the power of reading God's Word out loud to your children. But also, and perhaps even more closely related to the context of our passage, don't neglect the congregational gatherings and the opportunity hear and respond to God's Word together.
3. The instruction from the Lord was primarily through the written and recorded Word, but God also made provision for the writing of a song to be used to teach the people of Israel (vv.19-22). We'll be studying the lines of this song next week in Deut. 32, but we see here the effectiveness of song in training and instruction.
 1. We can probably all think of songs that have been stuck in our minds, or times when we hear a song we haven't heard in years and can instantly start singing along with the lyrics. The Lord knew this long before marketing agencies learned it.
 2. At Pillar I'm so thankful for the music ministry, and the team that carefully selects music each week. Lyrics are read and scrutinized, and sometimes catchy songs don't find their way into our singing because of doctrinal error or shallowness. Our time singing together is important and instructive. If you think that Sunday's all about the sermon, you're wrong. Learn the songs we sing and SING the songs we sing.
 3. Stand strong and courageous in the instruction that the Lord gives. God's Word is true and unchanging. Commit yourself to the Word of God; to the reading, the hearing, the singing of it, for faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17).
 1. Psalm 119:147-148 *"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words. My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise."*

Transition: The Lord faithfully leads, faithfully instructs, and lastly we see that the Lord faithfully warns.

The Lord Faithfully Warns (vv.16-18, 24-29)

1. In vv.16-18 the Lord warns Moses that Israel would forsake the Lord. When Israel would forsake the Lord, then the Lord would hide his face from them and allow them to reap the consequences of their sin. Moses, as a faithful leader, passes along this warning to the people in vv.24-29.
2. vv.24-29 Moses passes along the Book of the Law and instructs the Levites to place it by the side of the ark of the covenant.
 1. The Book of the Law would serve as a witness against them. It would show them their error, their rebellion and stubbornness, and remind them of the path of righteousness when they have left it.
 2. v.29 *"For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you."* - To turn aside is to change direction, to leave an established path and to stray.
 3. This is what the law does; it shows us our strayings and wanderings from God's righteous ways.
 4. When the Lord is faithful to warn, be thankful. It's not always words of comfort and consolation, affirmation and praise, that are needed. There are times when comfort and consolation are best, but there are other times when words of reproof, rebuke, correction, warning and exhortation are the best. It's these words that drive us to Christ as our hope and anchor, to Jesus as our justification and righteousness.
 5. When the Lord is faithful to warn, be strong and courageous. Know that for you, Christian, it's a sign of sonship, and the Lord chastens the child he loves. Don't be determined and defiant. He wants what is best, so turn and repent, confess your sin, call out for forgiveness through Christ, and return to walking in the way that he has prescribed for you to walk, according to his Word.

Conclusion: Church, we serve a faithful God. The Apostle John writes that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). We, much like Israel, are prone to wander and stray, to walk in rebellion and stubbornness. Be strong and courageous today as you look back to what he has accomplished in the past for your redemption through Christ. Be strong and courageous today as you look forward to what he has promised for your eternity. Be strong and courageous as you look at the faithfulness of God in his leading, his instructing, and his warning.

Family

Table Talk



July 2, 2017

Family Discussion

1. Be strong and courageous! Do you know what this command means? What reason did the children of Israel have to be strong and courageous?
2. Are you strong? Are you courageous? Why do you think so? Does your strength every fail? What about your courage- do you ever become afraid and fearful? There is only ONE who can truly make us strong and courageous, and it is only His goodness and greatness that we stand upon. Read the Scriptures and be instructed in and reminded of why we can be strong and courageous, always.
3. You can only be strong and courageous when you trust in God's strength and faithfulness. But, you must know and be reminded of His strength and faithfulness through the reading and counsel of His Word. Do you build your strength through the exercise of studying His Word?

GOD'S TRUTH

Stand strong and courageous in the faithfulness of God. He goes before you!

Key Verse



"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."
Deuteronomy 31: 6 ESV

TABLE READING

Lead your kids into God's Word...

1. Deuteronomy 31:6
2. Job 6:11-13; Job 36:5; 1 Chronicles 16:11, 27-28; Psalm 46:1-7; Psalm 73:26; Isaiah 41:1-10
3. 2 Timothy 3:14-15

Scripture Memory: Deuteronomy 31:8

"AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES." - DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (ESV)