

No Wall Too Tall

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Week 2, April 14, 2024

*² After three days the officers went throughout the camp, ³ giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it.⁴ **Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits^[a] between you and the ark; do not go near it."** (Joshua 3-NIV)*

How many love maps? You have a map by your bed. There is a map sitting in the car, under the seat. From time to time, you drive into a world of fantasizing about travel, and those fantasies are stimulated by looking at maps. Well, in ancient times, map makers were as much about the pictures on maps, as the metrics. **Ancient map makers often drew pictures on their maps of potential life-threatening obstacles.**

In Roman times you might find on the map a drawing of some lions. And those drawings and locations often represented unexplored territory. Uncharted territory. Threatening territory. Later during mid evil days, explorers would draw dragons, deadly sea creatures and sea serpents. Fictional life-threatening obstacles that an explorer, adventurer or traveler would be sure to encounter.

The sketches of mythical beasts and sea creatures invoked a potential threat that one would encounter at sea or on land when entering uncharted lands or uncharted waters. Today, this is where we seem to find ourselves. Not only in our corner of the globe, but especially in the Middle East.

So much uncertainty is swirling and unfolding that almost everyone is frightened to some degree about the future. Anxious about tomorrow. People are anxious as all eyes are on the Middle East. **More about that in a few minutes.** It reminds me that the bible is the most relevant book ever written because it speaks to such times in every generation. And especially today!

We are living in uncharted territory. We are living in perilous times. The nation of Israel had arrived at the Promise Land, according to the book of Joshua. Uncharted territory stretched out in front of them. And in Joshua's day and in ours we are experiencing unmapped territories. *⁴ Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. (Josh 3)*

There are rivers to cross. Oh, there it is on the map. The Jordan River.

There are walls to scale. Oh, there it is on the map. A fortified city called Jericho.

There are armies to defeat. Oh, there they are some of the most savage and evil people that ever roamed the planet-Perizzites, Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites...Semitic names that sound unusual to the western mind.

To the Hebrew, those names struck terror in the hearts of God's people. These people were responsible for child sacrifice, prostitution at the temple, witchcraft, and all forms of idolatry. Millions of people who had never faced such a challenge were about to go to war.

Defeating the enemy and taking possession of their God given inheritance would be a formidable obstacle.

Previously God gave his children plenty of time to think over whether they wanted to live in rebellion or move into the promises of God and take possession.

For God's people in the wilderness, who had just exited from what was an endless routine of walking in circles, victories were sparse. And obedience was scarce. Lizards and tumbleweeds were everywhere. God's people were redeemed from Egypt but not yet, released from their past.

Joshua chapter 3 is one of the best passages in the bible to show us **No Wall Is Too Tall. No River Is Uncrossable.** Joshua and his people are about to experience the greatest moment in Israel's history. For the first time, the land which God promised to Abraham was now in sight.

¹⁴ The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. (Gen 13-NIV)

Let's pause for a moment, and soak in the reality of what is happening for God's people. It is like a hiker rounding a trail corner and seeing for the first time the peak you are attempting to summit.

When you trek to Everest Base Camp, there is a trail side vista on day two on the trail when you climb a pretty elevated route, suddenly you come to a small plateau and see for the first time Mt Everest off in the distance. Located miles up into the Khumbu region of Nepal.

The thrill of seeing your destination for the first time brings high 5's fives to other trekkers. Gives you a new boost of motivation because you can now see where you are headed. Makes all of work to get to this place more tolerable.

What is true of trekkers enroute to Everest, is even more true of God's people trudging their way to the Promised Land. Suddenly they see for the first time across the Jordan, on the plains of Jericho their God-given home. Long awaited destination.

The land that God promised Israel's forefathers was now in sight. (Duet 8:7-9; Numbers 13:32; Josh 5:6)

When the people stand on tip toe, and kids sit on the shoulders of dad here is what they see-

⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; ⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. (Duet 8-NIV)

The land which Moses described to the children of Israel, and tells us about today, was a special place geographically that God had promised to his people. Thus, the Promised Land.

Throughout history, God's people had been looking forward to the day when they would possess, occupy, and own under God's rule this beautiful and bountiful new homeland. 40 years before 12 leaders who spied out the land, saw a glimpse of the possibilities, but were too afraid and led a revolt against Joshua, Caleb and Moses.

This resulted in God to declaring, **like Gandalf the Wizard in Lord of the Rings-You Shall Not Pass.**

And so, the Hebrews went into a 40-year time out. Penalty Box. Sat in the corner. It was fear that kept them from their future.

³² And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. (Numbers 13-NIV)

God became angry at that generation because of their unbelief. Fear. Lack of faith. Who of you, would be enjoying God's favor and blessings if you could win over fear? Boost your faith? Now, you can with the series-**NO Wall Too Tall.**

So, God reprimanded and scolded Israel, by saying, your future is cut short. I will still love you. I will still protect you. I will take you home when you die. But, in the in-between-time, you will live with **limitations. Lizards.** And a **long-term** punishment which is spelled out in Josh 5.

⁶ The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. (Josh 5-NIV)

After 40 years of disobedience, God's people are now standing on the edge of the border, between Moab (Jordan) and Israel (Palestine). Ready to enter Israel through the back door. **Behind Israel were the graves of their parents. In front of them was a land flowing with milk and honey.** Cows and Bees.

The land of Promise. And flowing at flood stage, in front of Joshua there between the **promise of possession and the fulfillment of their dreams was a river.** On one of those ancient maps, was a river called the River of Jordan. The Jordan River was not a fearful or a frightening body of water. It was a small crick, as they say in the south compared to the mighty Mississippi or the Amazon in the Jungles of Brazil.

During the spring harvest the Jordan River had swelled to over a mile wide from a few hundred feet. Torrential. Fast Moving. And life threatening. It overflowed its banks. Instead of being a 100 ft wide, it was now a mile wide.

If you could identify a time of the year, to not to cross the river, this would be it. It is now the spring harvest season.

The river is swollen, and God's people are chosen.

The river is massive, but God's people are mighty in the Lord.

The river is uncrossable, but God's people are unstoppable.

For 7 years God's people are virtually unstoppable. 7 nations conquered. 31 kings defeated. Over 10,000 square miles of choice real estate to possess.

God's people had just come out of retirement. Come out of refinement. And now they see their future home but are not sure how to enter into their future. God was making this entry into Israel's future as difficult as possible.

Wandering in the wilderness was all God's people knew, now they are so close to their promise, blessing and favor and yet, so far because a river stood between them and their promise.

God is telling them to go to a land they have only heard about. It was a good land, but a godless land. It was a land of favor, but filled with people that were faithless. It was a land flowing with milk and honey all they had known was manna and quail.

A land filled with giants. Fortified cities. The people were armed with weapons of war they had not known. They would face enemies with iron weapons of war.

And now God had placed his people at the Jordan River at flood stage. And on the other side of the river, more walls too tall. More enemies too strong. And as we will see, no manna. No angel food cake. They will have to secure food from the land or starve to death.

*God often places us in situations, that leave us powerless to succeed without Him.
(Judges 7:3; Daniel 3:19; 1 Kings 18:33-35; John 11:17)*

And this is a pattern you might as well get used to. What is true in the Promised Land, is true of KansasLand.

1. God removed 30,000 soldiers from Gideons army-to place God's people in a situation where they could not succeed without God.

³ Now announce to the army, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained. (Judges 7-NIV)

2. God allowed the furnace to be heated 7 times hotter than usual, to place God's people in a situation where they could not succeed without God.

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. (Dan 3:9)

3. God instructed Elijah to soak the sacrifice, to place God's people in a situation where they could not succeed without God.

³³ He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood." ³⁴ "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵ The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. (1 Kings 18-NIV)

4. Jesus did not come to the tomb of Lazarus until he been dead 4 days, to place God's people in a situation where they could not succeed without God.

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. (John 11:17)

Without God's intervention, 3 million of God's people could never gain their inheritance. Achieve God's dream. Cross over the Jordan.

Have accepted the reality that you are powerless to succeed without God?

The people of God are ready to inherit. Throw off their past. Take possession. Prove that No Wall Too Tall.

And No Water Too Raging.

No People Too Savage.

No Faith Too Small.

Again, No Wall Too Tall.

*Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before **crossing over**.² After three days the officers went throughout the camp,³ giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. (Josh 3-NIV)*

The word "crossover: in Hebrew means to "go from what is known, to what is unknown." (Josh 3:4)

To go from what is known, to what is unknown. The bible tells us God brought Israel to the bank of the Jordan and God left them there for 3 days. Why? God wanted to show his people visually, vividly, and victoriously that a miracle was about to take place.

This is a good place to pause the story and talk about the story concerning - The End. There are so many events unfolding that any one combination could light a fuse, if one has not been lit already and started the clock ticking toward the Tribulation.

7 years at the end of the age is upon us. **I believe to my toes we are in the last, of the last, of the last of days!**

The events that have unfolded especially with Israel, we could not have anticipated or predicted. And there is going to be more world events that send a shiver down your spine.

What is Hamas?

We have no control over the future. And we often find ourselves at an impasse. So how do you cross over your Jordan Rivers?

How do we cross the Jordan Rivers of our lives?

As I studied this text and story this past week, **I noticed 3 qualities about God that I want you to trust.** I read multiple authors' comments. Listened to pod casts. Listened to the stories of Joshua 1-5, dozens of times by audio. And meditated and humbled myself, before the same God that brought them over, and now wants to bring you over, and into your Promised Land. So, live for God because...

His provision is behind us. His presence is beside us.

And his power is before us.

You will hear about strategies and truths that worked in 1200 BC, and will work now in 2024 AD. They worked for Joshua and now can work for Jesse. Julie. They worked at Shittim and can work in Seattle and St Louis. They worked at Gilgal and can work in Grand Rapids. Grand Coulee. They worked at the Jordan and can now work in Junction City. I want to continue with the story right from the bible, but I want to apply it for us, as it is, and it is. I promise you it is.

The provision of God **behind** us. (Duet 8:2,4; 29:5)

When we face Rivers Uncrossable, maps with dragons, walls to tall or giants to Gargantua's, we have the **provision of God behind us**.

Because God has been faithful in times past, he will do it again.

⁵ Yet the Lord says, "During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. (Duet 29:5)

² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. (Duet 8-NIV)

The place to start when facing uncrossable rivers and unscalable cities like Jericho, is the past. Take a survey of what God has done in your life.

Now the word, **remember** how the Lord your God led you.

The word remember means to mark out, to set aside, to underline. To highlight.

What did God's people have in their memory that they could recall giving them increased faith for the hour? Provision from their wilderness wanderings. While they were subject to God's punishment for disobedience, (you shall not enter), they were still the recipient of God's provision. God's presence. God's protection.

The journey in the desert was one miracle after another. Leaving Egypt. Water from rocks. Food from heaven. And shade from trees. Every day they were in the desert God's people were supernaturally protected and led by God.

They were led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The people of Israel knew exactly where and when to move.

By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. (Ex 13:21-NIV)

Never forget your future is clearer to God, than your past is to you. Let me offer you an assignment, make a list of God's provisions, 5 of them. Then review that list next time, you are shaky about God's provision. So, the first quality of God, we should remember when the Walls Are Too Tall, the Rivers Are Unscalable, and the Giants Are Too Giant. The provision of God behind us, can boost your faith.

The presence of God **beside** us. (Josh 3:1-3)

Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. ² After three days the officers went throughout the camp, ³ giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. (Josh 3-NIV)

When you study scripture and notice that God repeats himself, that is important. And the central focus of Joshua 3-4, is the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant appears in those chapters by name 17 times. And it is referred to by the pronoun "it" 5 times. So, in those two chapters you find a reference to the Ark, 22 times in total. 53% of the verses have the Ark or a pronoun for it, in the text. Amazing!

Wow! God is always present. The protection of God was the cloud and fire leading and protecting. But the presence of God was represented by the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant was 4.25 feet long by 2.5 feet by 2.5 ft. And in this box with a lid, gold rings on the side, to be carried, were copies of the bible God gave to Moses, portion of the manna God has provided in the wilderness, Aaron's rod, these were the contents. **The Ark was associated with the light, glory, and presence of God.**

When the Ark was removed from the people of God, they were defeated. When the Ark was present in battle they triumphed over their enemy.

*¹⁰ And Joshua said, "By this you will know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly drive out from you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Gergashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is **crossing over** ahead of you into the Jordan. (Josh 3_NIV)*

Notice, when they crossed the river God's people were to keep a distance but **keep a distance of about 2000 cubits (about 3000 feet)**. Or about half a mile. The idea was for the Ark

to be out far enough so that everyone could see it. God was teaching that his people all of us, need to keep our eyes on God. Especially when you are facing Walls Too Tall or Rivers That Are Uncrossable. If you do not keep your eyes on God, your heart will fill up with fear.

Like Peter who started to walk on the water, and when he took his eyes off Jesus, and he began to sink. When we take our eyes off God, you too begin to sink into fear, depression, anxiety, anger, and a host of other emotional difficulties.

The power of God before us. (Josh 3:13-16)

¹³ And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”

So, the people crossed over opposite Jericho. (Josh 3-NIV)

Notice, it was not until the priests placed their feet into the water before the river began to recede. This is called faith along the way. But if all I need is faith along the way, then why do so many of us who love God, pray, read our Bibles, and serve the poor, why do we suffer from spiritual weakness as often as we do?

These questions have haunted me personally for years. I would say, if the God whom I love and serve is the possessor of limitless power and if dozens of verses in the Bible indicate he is more than willing to infuse and release His power to me and through me, **then why do I walk around feeling as weak as often as I do?**

Why do I fall so easily into temptation? Not just once. Not just twice. But again, and again? Why do I cop a bad attitude? Why do I fail to be obedient in the areas of my life God has stated clearly, he wants me to act in faith on a certain matter? Why don't I take more risk for God? If only I were stronger for God? Right?

Now, to get to the answer I want to frame. A principle from God's Word that explains why each of us often lack faith. Perhaps, a couple New Testament stories will help. One takes place at a wedding. The other takes place amongst some people with leprosy.

*⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.
⁸ Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” (John 2-NIV)*

¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. (Luke 17-NIV)

Here is the principle: **God is going to intervene somewhere between here and there.** As you start pouring water, it will become wine. As you start walking toward the health care czar, leprosy becomes healed bodies. As you place your feet in the Jordan the river recedes.

God is saying, you just trust me with your faith and collect water, walk toward the priest, and move into the river Jordan and I will intervene, you will see.

What God is promising is a pattern we see in scripture—it is **FAITH along the way.** Somewhere between here and there, God will do a miracle. God will heal you of your painful past. God will lower the RPMs of your regret. God will give you faith for the journey.

God is going to intervene somewhere between here and there!

Let me suggest you focus this week on 3 qualities of your faith, and in doing so, Walls Too Tall will topple, and Rivers Uncrossable will open up and Giants Will Fall.

Let Go of Your Past (Eccl 3:1; Psalm 32:3)

Let Go of Regret (Phil 3:13; Joel 2:25)

Grow Your Faith (John 2:7; Luke 17:14; Josh 3:15-16)

Father,

As your child, you will provide. As your child will guide. As your child you will guard. As in the days of Joshua, show me No Wall Is Too Tall, and No Rivers Are Uncrossable. So, I claim your promise-⁴ Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.

I accept the truth that you often place me in circumstances where I cannot succeed without your help, Father! So, I am asking Father for your provision, presence, and power to go with me and go before me. In my journey to your Promised Land for me, I will experience your intervention somewhere between here and there.

In Jesus Name. Amen.