

Fathers Who Carry Arks

Joshua 3:15-17 KJV And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) [16] That the waters which came down from above stood *and* rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that *is* beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. [17] And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

I. INTRODUCTION—THE RACE

Defeat! He lay there silently, a tear dropped from his eye.

“There’s no sense running anymore—three strikes, I’m out—why try?”

The will to rise had disappeared, all hope
had fled away,
So far behind, so error prone, closer all the
way.

“I’ve lost, so what’s the use,” he thought,
“I’ll live with my disgrace.”

But then he thought about his dad who
soon he’d have to face.

“Get up,” an echo sounded low, “Get up
and take your place.

You were not meant for failure here, so get
up and win the race.”

With borrowed will, “Get up,” it said, “You
haven’t lost at all,

For winning is not more than this—to rise
each time you fall.”

So up he rose to win once more, and with a
new commit,

He resolved that win or lose, at least he
wouldn’t quit.

So far behind the others now, the most he’d
ever been,

Still he gave it all he had and ran as though
to win.

Three times he’d fallen stumbling, three
times he rose again,

Too far behind to hope to win, he still ran to the end.

They cheered the winning runner as he crossed, first place,
Head high and proud and happy; no falling,
no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster crossed the line, last place,

The crowd gave him the greater cheer for finishing the race.

And even though he came in last, with head bowed low, unproud;

You would have thought he won the race, to listen to the crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well."

"To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell."

And now when things seem dark and difficult to face,

The memory of that little boy helps me in my race.

For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all,

And all you have to do to win—is rise each time you fall.

“Quit! Give up, you’re beaten,” they still shout in my face.

But another voice within me says, “Get up and win that race.”

(Unknown)

-That little story bears out the power of a watching father, whose voice we may not hear, but whose spirit we can sense, when there is a stumbling attempt and effort at this thing that God calls life.

-If ever a generation needed fathers who were willing to impart that kind of wisdom to their sons and daughters, it is now!

II. FATHERS BEARING ARKS

-The text also paints a similar picture for us. In Joshua 3:15 we are told that the Jordan was overflowing its banks at the time of the harvest. They had faced challenges in the past and now this was just another one in the long list of them.

-We find the priests were faced with a great challenge on that day, one that is elaborated on in this chapter and the next one.

-Jordan at flood stage was a dilemma in itself. But when they stepped down into the water, the power of God went into overdrive.

- The waters that were rushing from up the river were dammed up.
- Downriver it was as if someone had turned off the faucet.
- The huge volume of water on the north side formed a large wall and stood in a heap.

-Again, we cannot forget that his river was literally whipping in a frenzy of a raging flood. The banks were overflowing. Then to consider that these priests stepped down into the edges of this frothing and boiling water is almost beyond belief.

-Just to do this was a test of their faith and of their obedience. Every father will soon

discover that being a competent and spiritual father in our days will be a test of our faith and our obedience. We also have to grasp that we will never make it unless we are given to becoming spiritual men! A few good men. . . men full of compassion. . . men full of faith. . .

A. The Weight of the Ark

-Just think for moment about the responsibility of what these priests did on that particular day. They were bearing the Ark of the Covenant while all the people of Israel passed over to the other side. They could not move or let the Ark down even for a rest, they had to shoulder their responsibility.

-The Ark of the Covenant being about 3 ½ feet by 2 feet and it was covered with gold on the inside and the outside. Conservative estimates were that they Ark weighed at least 750 pounds but more likely it weighed in excess of one ton (2000 pounds)! That means that each priest was responsible for holding up anywhere from 175 pounds to as

much as 500 pounds by those wooden beams that were hooked into its rings!

-Men. . . the responsibilities that we have as the priests of our homes is a weighty matter and we cannot afford to shirk our duties. We have to be spiritual men first and foremost and everything else has a tendency to take care of itself.

-There are always rivers at flood-stage that stand between us and the grapes in the Promised Land. We have to cross them. God has always made everything worth having difficult to get to.

- He puts oil thousands of feet below the floor of the ocean.
- He puts gold down in places that they have to be mined out.
- He places pearls in the sea and we have to dive down and dig them out.
- He places the potential in the seed that only comes alive through the work of farming.

-If this is the case for material, earthly things, there has to be the same understanding that it will apply toward spiritual things also. Spiritual character only takes place when men are willing to cross spiritual Jordans. No man just happens to fall into greatness, much less spiritual greatness.

- He knows much about the Scriptures because while others were watching football, he was wrestling with the Word.
- He grasps the powerful principles of Scripture because while others were sleeping he was working in the Word.
- He wrestled with himself; he fought down his carnal appetites and replaced them with spiritual feasts.
- He toiled and pushed in prayer until the breaking of the day until he was marked by the Spirit.
- He ran the disciplined Christian life and it turned him into a marathoner in the Spirit.
- He looked at material possessions as ways to invest into the Kingdom of

God rather than to flash around to impress his peers.

-What about the tears? Tears accompany men who are world-changers.

- Tears over sin.
- Tears over their lukewarm friends.
- Tears over the desolation of the Church.
- Tears over those who resist the Spirit because of a hard-heart.
- Tears over backsliders.
- Tears over their missed opportunities.

-We often wish that we could just pack up people in our vehicles and take them to a spiritual point so they could see what we see. . . but the fact of the matter is this. . . we all have to make our own journey.

-While we are doing these things, we are bearing the weight of the Ark. It can be wearying and discouraging but there will come a day when we understand the power of what has been done through our

devotion to God. That will be a day of great joy.

B. The Strength of the Priests

-But if there is a heavy weight of bearing the Ark. . . there is also the strength of the priests to match the challenge.

Joshua 3:17 KJV And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD ***stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan***, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

-This verse indicates to us that there was a strength that bore the weight and responsibility of their burden.

-There was a solid foundation that they were standing on. They did not rely on a stoic reservation to do the job. It was not a confidence in the laws of nature that the waters were held back. They simply had a confidence in God that He was going to help them to overcome.

-Their faith came from the fact that there were some victories in their past that they had witnessed the powerful hand of God in operation. Look to your past! There are some times that God delivered you and He will do it again.

-Despite the fact that the job they were attending to was very challenging, God empowered them to accomplish the task. Our task in this life is to fulfill the Great Commission. Fulfilling the Great Commission starts with our families and we have to start with our wife and our children!

-We will do it by standing!

-The priests stood in the Jordan until all the children of Israel passed through the parted river.

- They occupied a place of honor and danger (most see only the honor and never the danger).

- They had to endure the test of courage and of patience.
- They had to overcome their own weariness and discomfort as they held up the Ark. (Few realize the cost that is involved in the anointing that they get to walk by on the way to the Promised Land.)
- The presence of the priests held back the tide of the Jordan which was at a flood stage.
- The presence of the priests blessed others.

-The questions that I am forced to ask now are:

- What if they would have given in to weariness?
- What if one or two or three of the priests would have left their responsibility?
- What if they would have lost their courage when they looked at the walls of water?
- What if they would have given into the laziness of the day?

-You ought to thank God from the depth of your soul if you have a father in your life that is unwavering in his commitment to hold the anointing of God!

-The duty of the priests held back the water, kept the ground dry, and provided a safe passage.

- I doubt anyone came by and told them to keep their heads up.
- I am certain that those passing by were more worried about getting across than they burden they were bearing.
- I have a feeling that the priests probably felt unappreciated and ignored throughout the whole process.
- I am certain that the children of Israel were probably more intent on looking at the massive wall of water behind the priests than paying attention to them.

-But despite all of these things, they understood there was a deeper thing to

attending to their duties. They realized that safe passage to the next place depended on them.

-I am encouraging every father and grandfather to never give in to compromise, to weariness, and to laziness. I am encouraging you to be courageous and to patiently endure until all of your children and your wife make it safely across this treacherous Jordan.

C. Don't Underestimate Your Strength and Influence

-For those of you trying to understand the role of a father in your life and even more that role of a pastor in your life. . .

- Have you ever wondered why that your father has spoken sharply about hurrying along in your walk with God?
- Have you ever considered why a father urges and tries to provoke good works in your life?

- Have you ever wondered why a father is so insistent that you press forward quickly and without delay?
- Has it ever crossed your mind why he wants you to quickly let go of the world?
- Have you ever thought that your father was too overboard about some particular issue but as time passed on, it became real clear to you why he was taking his stand?

-Fathers. . . take your stand on the crucial and important things of life!

-There must be someone to stand in our generation. When all sorts of people, preachers, and churches are waffling about on things that we have always believed, we have to stand!

-Don't get confused about what is taking place it is the threshing and winnowing of the Church at the hand of God. Don't be surprised at who is backsliding . . . just let it take you closer to the Lord! Get a grip on the Truth!

- Stand for the power of the Scriptures.
- Stand for the necessity of Holiness.
- Stand for the values of separation from the world.
- Stand for the tenets of Apostolic doctrine.
- Stand for the Truth.
- Don't be afraid to try the spirits of men by the Word of God.

-A father who is bearing an Ark will love the old paths. He will be hungry for preaching that defines what holiness is all about.

Somewhere, somebody has to take a stand and it may as well be a father. Backtrack in history to the 1830-1840 era and you discover ten men who were selected to do a job. They were given horses, saddles, a change of clothes, a hand-gun, and a rifle. Next they were told that they were responsible to cover thousands of miles of territory and to make sure that they protected the settlers against Indian attacks. As time passed, their scope widened and in addition to protecting the settlers from Indians, it now included

keeping reign on the ruffian outlaws and cattle rustlers that ran rampant through the land. They were just ten men who were underpaid, under-fed and basically homeless rambling around Texas to do their job. But that small group of ten grew and became the storied Texas Rangers. They did their best and it paid off!

-Those priests who bear the Ark need to find a translation to our times and become men who are willing to bear the Ark. We ought to honor every godly father who is doing his best in our times!

-I know a lot of fathers that are doing their best to get you out of the riverbed and into the Promised Land! You ought to do everything you can to help that father who is also a servant of the Lord!

-We must give our obedience to God and let Him take care of the outcome.

-I encourage every man to keep your feet in a firm place, to keep your hand on the handle of the Ark, and keep your head up.

So much depends on what you are doing in this generation.

III. CONCLUSION—TAKING OWNERSHIP

David Frum, one of President George W. Bush's speechwriters, wrote in his book *The Right Man* that when he drove home on the evening of September 11, 2001 after the tragic attack on our nation by Muslim terrorists that something grew within him. He wrote that a sudden sense of American ownership gripped him as never before. He said that suddenly the F-16's flying overhead were *his* jets. The empty streets in Washington were *his* streets. The burning Twin Towers in New York were *his* towers. The smoldering Pentagon was *his* Pentagon. He said that when he got home his wife and children ran and embraced him almost in desperation. They were *his* family. On that night they piled up pillows and sleeping bags and all of them slept in the living room to be together. (pp. 129-130)

-It is amazing to see what an attack from the outside will do to a nation, to a country, to a family, but especially to a father. . .

-Brothers. . . on this day we shall commit ourselves as never before to bearing the Ark for our families. . .