

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 12th July 2020

God Advises and Encourages His Servants

Prayer.

Father God, we praise you that you bring certainty to our lives during an uncertain time, that we know we can safely put our trust in you and not in our circumstances, that you are always with us, always listening to us, always caring for us, always leading us, always encouraging us.

We don't know what the future holds,
BUT WE KNOW WHO HOLDS THE FUTURE!

You are amazing, and we come this morning to bring you our praise, our worship, our thanks, and to offer up this time of worship today, so that we can feel your presence through the Holy Spirit, and hear your leading and guidance. Amen.

Song Give thanks to the Lord our God and King
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGTZq3uCPm0>

Prayer Time

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name

Let's spend time praising and thanking our amazing God.

Thy kingdom come Thy will be done

Pray that in these special circumstances people will turn to God and pray for those Christians who are persecuted for their faith in you

Give us this day our daily bread

Prayer for those of our community and wider world, for those needing food, financial, practical and emotional support.

An opportunity to share with God our personal needs, and to bring to Him those we care about.

And forgive us our trespasses as we too forgive

A quiet time to confess our failings, seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Pray for God's protection.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever.

Close our prayer time with praise and thanksgiving for answered prayer.

Song Be lifted up https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syDsQtqbo_s

Reading

Joshua 1:1-9 New International Version (NIV)

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. **5** No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

7 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **8** Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Song You are my anchor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bG3vUP4a3h0>

Some thoughts.

God advises and encourages His servants.

As I look back over my life, I have been struck by how helpful it has been to receive sound advice from those more experienced than me, and how constructive and supportive encouragement has been.

Without both of these helps, particularly in my earlier years, my life would not have taken the path it has, and I would have missed out.

Mentoring is acknowledged in the secular and business world as an essential step in development.

So how much better is it to have Almighty God as our mentor, who else is more powerful, more knowledgeable, more caring, more encouraging, and more able to lead and guide us.

We do not know the future, and if we were in a strange place, wouldn't it be really unwise, when offered a knowledgeable local guide, to say no thanks, I can manage on my own!

Our scripture passage this morning is a very well known one, and one which we might easily brush pass and say, "I know all about that". But to do this would be like ignoring the secular local guide.

At the beginning of this service I quoted the saying, "We don't know what the future holds, BUT WE KNOW WHO HOLDS THE FUTURE", and so we need to heed God's encouragement, mentoring and guidance.

God's promises are universal and timeless, and so the words given to Joshua are applicable to us today.

In the first six verses God promises Joshua that:-

Verse 3:- He will give Joshua what he has promised and what he needs." I will give you every place where you set your foot".

Verse 4:- His gift is extensive and inclusive. "Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west".

Verse 5 (a):- His protection is ensured. "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life".

Verse 5 (b):- His enduring presence will be with him. "So I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you".

God provides evidence that He delivers by reminding Joshua of his past track record, "As I was with Moses.....", He means it. He can deliver, He has proved it!"

In today's world we judge people by their track record before trusting them. We have the evidence of scripture which shows God's track record, **HE CAN BE TRUSTED COMPLETELY**".

So take heart, be encouraged, all these promises are available to us today because God does not change.

The popular Reggae song says "Don't worry, be happy cos every little things going to be alright".

Great sentiments, but with nothing to back them up!

By contrast when God says “So take heart, be encouraged” He means it and can deliver!

In verses 6, 7 and 9 God changes from giving promises, to repeatedly giving encouragement when He says:- “Be strong and (very) courageous”, not empty encouragement, but encouragement backed up by the promises in the earlier verses.

But these words are more than just encouragement, verse 9 makes it a commandment.

Like many of God’s promises in the Bible, these promises are conditional, Joshua and we today, have our part to play in what is essentially a contract between two parties, God and us.

What is our part? Verse 7 and 8 spell it out:-

1. Obey all God’s Commandments
2. Do not deviate from what God tells you.
3. Always keep in the front of your mind what God tells you through His word.
4. Be careful to do everything written in it.

Finally, God sets out the result of this obedience:-

Verse 8:- “Then you will be prosperous and successful”. This does not mean that following God’s instruction will make you materially rich, rather you will flourish and achieve the things God has planned for you.

Verse 9:- “The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

It can be lonely and unnerving walking forward into the future if we are on our own, BUT WE ARE NEVER ALONE, WE HAVE GOD WITH US!!!

Because God advises and encourages His servants..... and we are His servants!

Song Praise Him you heavens

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhrnsaeHPh4>

A closing thought

Our thoughts this morning have been centred on our guidance and encouragement, so as we close, let’s look outward.

May the beauty of God be reflected in our eyes,
the love of God be reflected in our hands,
the wisdom of God be reflected in our words,
and the knowledge of God flow from our heart,
that all might see, and seeing, believe.

A prayer of benediction

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Eph. 3:20-21

A song for praise and meditation

We serve a Saviour who died in our place, who rose again and conquered death for ever, who will return in glory and power, and with whom we will one day live for ever, so let us.....

O praise the name of our Lord our God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqBpifDpNKc>