Masculinity

**Deuteronomy 31:1-13**

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Jeff:Gracious heavenly Father, we give You thanks. And as we are in October we are mindful of the Reformation, and how it is in Christ alone that we stand by faith alone. And we rejoice in that, knowing that we do not contribute one thing to our salvation and are thankful, Lord, to rest in Christ. And we also know that union with Christ brings a change in life. And Father, we are thankful for the fruit that we receive that is because of Your power and Your work within us, uniting us to Your Son.

 Father, we are also thankful for the church. We’re thankful that You gather us together not just as individuals as we stand, but as a collective body we stand in Christ. And so the Savior looks upon us as His body on earth, and we are thankful for that and praise You that You have given us fellowship one with another.

 Father, we pray that You would bless us today. We are beset with the troubles of another day, and we know that each day has enough troubles of its own. And so as we stand in the cusp of a new day we ask that You would give us grace to stand. And we pray, Father, that You would give us the determination to live our lives faithfully; not flamboyantly, not outrageously, not looking for the next big thing, but so that we can settle in You steadfastly, taking one step after another, doing the ordinary thing. Lord, we ask that You will bless us in that, and we pray that You would give us fruit from it.

 Lord, we now pray that You would strengthen us by grace as we turn our attention to what it is to be men. And we ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

 **Brave Men:** Amen.

 **Jeff:** Well today is the last day I’m going to spend on this particular topic. And we’re going to move to another series after this. But we’ll just think about what it is to be strong and courageous from the vantage point of Deuteronomy 31:1-13. We’re going to be looking at an outline, and I’ll tell you what that is in just a minute. But I want us to look now at Deuteronomy 31, the first thirteen verses. And Don, is that just Deuteronomy that you have there?

 **Don Maurer:** It’s the last part of Numbers and all of Deuteronomy.

 **Jeff:** Is that right?

 **Don:** Yes.

 **Jeff:** Okay. How many volumes is your Bible?

 **Don:** Twenty.

 **Jeff:** Twenty volumes; wow!

 **Don:** Yes.

 **Jeff:** All right. Well if you have it, why don’t you read 31:1-13 for us?

 **Don:** Okay. *“Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. And he said to them: ‘I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the LORD has said to me, “You shall not cross over this Jordan.”*

 *“The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said. And the LORD will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. The LORD will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you.*

 *“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.’*

 *“Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.’*

 *“So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.’”* This is the word of the Lord.

 **Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

 **Jeff:** All right. Thanks, Don. I want us to think today about four things. I want us to talk about an introduction for just a few minutes. Then I want us to set the stage in order to help you to understand “be strong and courageous.” I want you to understand why I chose this passage. And then I want us to think about the phrase “like king, like people,” or “like leader, like people.” And then I want us to consider what you do when you go into the land. And then I want us to think about standing on the promises of God.

 So let’s think first of all about some introductory things. I want us to get it into our thinking what’s going on here. Moses is standing at the threshold of the land of promise.

 There are certain things that we are told about Moses at this point. He’s 120 years old. He says of himself, “I am no longer able to go in and go out among you.” And some people have said that what he is saying there is that “I’m no longer able to do military things.” I’m not sure I quite agree with that because we’re told that Moses at 120 was just as vigorous as he was when he was younger.

 **Transcriber’s Note:** Don Maurer’s phone talks.

 **Jeff:** Don, what in the world was that?

 **Don Maurer:** I’m turning off my phone. *(Laughter)*

 **Jeff:** You know, I was preaching one time. I don’t remember now what I was saying. But I just came to the end of a point and somebody’s phone came on and said, “Would you repeat that?” *(Laughter)* And I said, “I sure will!” *(Laughter)* You couldn’t have had that timed any better. *(Laughter)* Fantastic!

 Anyway, I wonder if what he means by “I’m no longer able to go in and out,” is what the Lord said to him. And what the Lord said to him was, “You may not go into the Promised Land.” And so I wonder if what he means is not “I’m no longer able to do these things.” I wonder if what he meant was “The Lord has forbidden men, and therefore I am no longer able to do these things.”

 And so he is now forbidden from going into the Promised Land, and the reason is that the Lord said so. And I want us just to think about this for a minute from the perspective of last week’s lesson.

 In last week’s lesson I tried to put in front of you two episodes from the life of David. I tried to show you how at one point, earlier in David’s life, when he was surrounded by his men at the cave of Adullam near there and Bethlehem was overrun by the Philistines, he said to his men in sort of an off-handed way, “Boy, I would love to have a glass of water from the well in the middle of Bethlehem.”

 And so his men basically said to one another, “Let’s get that water for David. We love him, so let us honor him with that water.” And they go and they get it, and he pours it down on the ground and he said, “If I drink this it would be like drinking your blood, and I’m not going to do that.” And so he honors them by pouring their water out on the ground as an offering to the Lord.

 But then later in his life you remember that he’s willing to spill the blood of one of his mighty men for the purpose of covering up his other sin. And so in one sense the blood of his men had meant so much to him that he wouldn’t take the water to his lips that they retrieved for him. And yet at another time he was willing to spill it himself.

 And then I said to you that this is something that by grace this man can surmount; he can overcome it. And you know, if you think about David, David sort of put me on the trail thinking about others like him.

 You know, I think about Saul of Tarsus. And I think to myself that Saul stood over the coats of the men who put Stephen to death. And you remember that Stephen had bested the men of various synagogues who came out to challenge him in Acts chapter 7. Paul was among them, and Paul was a member of the synagogue of Cilicia. So Stephen had bested Paul’s arguments, which is why some believe that when God says to him in Jesus Christ, “You’re kicking against the goads,” and when you read in Romans chapter 7 he talks about jealousy becoming alive in him, many scholars think he’s talking about that point where he was bested by Stephen. And it was easier to put that man to death or at least to approve of his death than it was to best him in an argument. And I think to myself: These are the failures of great men.

 And you know, I don’t think that we should gloss over those failures, because I want you to think about this. Think about how hard it would have been for Stephen’s parents to go to hear the apostle Paul when he came down to preach. You know, there’s something about that that you have to just take in and realize that God not only deals in grace with the person who is offended, but He has to deal in grace with those who have been wounded by the offense. And God is more than able to do that.

 And we see that God does do that in the life of David. I said to you that when David was fleeing from the city of Jerusalem because his son Absalom was in pursuit of him. Benaiah went with him, and he was one of the mighty men. And why? Because Benaiah recognized that God had done a redemptive work, a repenting work, in David, and David was a different person. Though his sin was great, God’s grace in him was greater. And Benaiah was willing to follow him, and others were as well. That’s true for Paul and it’s certainly true for us. And it was certainly true for Moses.

 But sometimes we have to live with the consequences of our actions. And David certainly had to live with the consequences of his actions. And one of the things that I could say here is this: Moses is living with the great consequences of his actions. He is a man who is standing on the cusp of the Promised Land and unable to enter in. He’s not able to go in and go out.

 God has given new leadership. And if you think about that and how that’s received by Moses, that’s a grace in and of itself. He isn’t jealous of Joshua; he isn’t bitter. He doesn’t say, “I’ve led these miserable people thus far. And You’re not going to let me go into the Promised Land because I hit a rock and because I got agitated with them. And You Yourself were going to destroy them, and I intervened. But I can’t go in!”

 This kind of attitude is easy for me. And it’s easy for all of us, because we can think of these kinds of things and say, “What in the world?” But you know, I’m going to tell you something. When we begin to do that, I think that we need to understand what we’re doing.

 We have changed grace into merit. And what we’ve said is, “I have done this, I have done that. And doesn’t that merit a little grace?” And as soon as we begin to think that, the old Adam just crept back into our thinking.

 So I think it’s important for us to think about this particular moment in a realistic way: to think about Moses and where he is, and to think about the consequences. These are things that happen to us all the time. I mean, to some degree or another we can relate to what’s going on here.

 And so Moses has to transfer leadership. There is new leadership, and that leadership is Joshua. And what he wants to do is that he wants to put Joshua in the right position so that he can lead effectively. And for Moses, regardless of what happened to him, this means that Moses believes that there is something bigger than himself and his own reputation at stake. He understands that not only is there a people that need to move into a land and grow, but Moses understands that there is something even bigger than that. He understands that the redemption of the world is at stake. In other words, these people need to find a promise given to Abraham built into the land, take the land, and make that land fruitful so that all the nations will flow to it.

 That’s what Moses understands. And so he understands that whatever his reputation might be in the future, it doesn’t matter in comparison to God’s reputation and His kingdom work. That’s the important thing; that’s a valuable lesson. And again I think that for us as men, what’s at stake for us oftentimes is our reputation.

 Now I’m not saying that we shouldn’t regard our reputation and even fight for our reputation. But what I am saying is that our reputation is a much smaller matter in comparison to fighting for Christ’s reputation and for the kingdom’s reputation, and so on.

 So we need to keep that in proper perspective.

 And Moses does. He introduces Joshua as the next leader. But there’s something else that I want us to notice here, and those are the things that I want us to look at in terms of the outline. I want us to get the principles down.

 The first one I want us to look at is: *like king, like people; like leader, like people.* And this is an important one. Why? Well, when you think about the character of the church under age, one of the things that you have to realize is that God was saying things like this all the time. In one of the Prophets He says, *“Like priest, like people.”* In other words, he realizes that leadership matters.

 Now that’s hard for us today, because we live in such an individualistic society. We live in a society where I am basically the individual, and that means I can create myself to be whatever I want to be.

 And this is really the bigger issue, isn’t it? And what I mean by “this is a bigger issue” is that I’m going to jump into this, and maybe it’s going to be hard for you to understand, or maybe not. But basically what we have is that we have young people today who inside feel like they can become whatever they want. And I’m not talking about Johnny who believes he can become the quarterback. I’m talking about Johnny who believes he can become Sarah.

 And then what happens is that it’s not good enough that they believe that. But we have the technology available to them where they think that they can actually make that change. But even if they could just make that change through technology—at least through appearances,--there’s something else, because that’s never going to come. They need to be recognized by others and affirmed in their decisions. Can I say it like this? They need leaders individually, even if it’s of their own agenda, even if that agenda is just transition from one sex to another; they need to be leaders.

 And so what we have here is that we have an entire generation that is utterly lacking in respect for authority and leadership of any kind. And that’s where we are today. I think that we need to recognize that.

 So when we deal with a text like this and I’m talking to you about leadership: like king, like people; like leader, like people, we need to understand that if we actually believe this, we are in a very small segment of society these days. And the thing that we need to remember is this. The thing that we need to remember is that we go to church. And we think, Oh, there’s the pastor, and there are session members around us, and we are untouched by the world. Why do we have to worry about expressive individualism? Why do we have to worry about what Kant or Hegel or Marx or any of these philosophers? Why do I have to worry about what any of them have done to the society around me? Why do I need to worry about that?

 The answer is that because it has seeped into every individual. And I want you to know that every individual under 35 years old swims in the milieu of what we’re dealing with today in secular society. So it’s not just out there; it’s in every one of us to some degree or another, especially the younger you get; it’s in them. And we can’t live with the myth that if we home school or Christian school them that somehow we’ll insulate them from that, because it doesn’t happen.

 You know, I was with my daughter the other day. I said to my daughter, “Let me ask you a question. It seems to me that your generation—you know, 20-year-olds—it seems to me that there is an empathy or sympathy for the trans-gender person. Would this be true?” She said, “That’s true.”

 And I said, “I was with a person in his mid-20s the other day.” And I said, “Is it true that people in your generation have a sympathy for the trans-gender person?” He said, “Oh yes, absolutely.”

 Now I asked my daughter and I asked this person in his 20s; I asked them the same question. I want to tell you something. When I look at this situation I see it entirely differently. My daughter said to me, “We are a generation that hates conflict.”

 “Okay, I can buy that; I get that.” The man in his mid-20s said to me, “When I see someone who is trans-gender, the first thing that I say to myself is, ‘I feel so bad for that person! I can’t imagine standing in front of the mirror feeling like I’m in the wrong body.”

 And I thought to myself: I understand both of those things, both of them. But I as a 54-year-old person who has a little bit of a pugilistic tendency, I look at that entirely differently. I saw a video the other day where three adults were gathering around two teenagers. One is a boy pretending to be a girl. The other is an actual girl. And he had just smacked her on the head with a steel water bottle and fractured her skull and is gnarling in her face! And three adults are around, screaming, and they get onto her. But they won’t touch him because they’re afraid! And when I look at the trans-gender situation I don’t say, “Oh, I feel the angst of the boy who stands in front of the mirror and thinks he’s an actual girl!” In my mind I say, “What is going on here? This is absolutely nuts!”

 So I want you to understand something. *(Unclear)* We are living in a culture that doesn’t understand this, because guess who was in power in that altercation? It was that boy pretending to be a girl. He had all the power in the world; he drew everyone into the group.

 Oh by the way, the actual biological girl—and I hate to say it because of what happened to her,--the actual biological girl was expelled from school. So we are living in a day and in an age where people don’t understand that we’re talking about fear. But if this kind of thing is ever going to manifest itself again, if this kind of thing is ever going to manifest itself in our circles, we need to listen to this kind of thing. And can I say this? We need to submit ourselves to the leadership that God has placed over us. We need to be good followers.

 Leaders need to be good leaders.. And even when there’s a bad leader we can’t chuck all the leaders. We have to say, “A bad leader; sorry about that!” But we need to be good followers. If we’re leaders we need to be good leaders. And we can’t let bad examples on either side hinder us as if the whole situation is bad. The Scriptures are true.

 **Brave Man:** Amen.

 **Jeff:** So the character of the church under age is of vital importance for us. Why? Because it’s structured in this way: like leader, like people. And so there are things that are said to the people, and there are things that are said to Joshua. Why? Because like leader, like people.

 Now I want you to look with me at some of these for just a minute. In verses 1-6, to the people.

 **Transcriber’s Note:** From the ESV.

 **Jeff:** *“You shall go over the Jordan. The LORD your God Himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before so that you shall dispossess them. And Joshua will go over as your head, as the LORD has spoken.”*

 And then you get down to verses 7 and 8 when he says: *“Then he summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel.”* So he talks to the people, and then he summons Joshua and he talks to Joshua.

 And this is what he says: *“Be strong; do not fear. The LORD goes before you.”* Those three things are vital things, aren’t they? *“Be strong; do not fear. The LORD goes before you.”*

 I want us to think about some of these things for just a minute. But I want to read verses 7 and 8 in their entirety.

 *“Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: ‘Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them. And you shall put them in possession of it; it is the LORD who goes before you, who will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”*

 Leadership is to lead. And in this case what that means is that it doesn’t mean being perfect. But it means being faithful.

 **Brave Man:** Amen.

 **Jeff:** That’s what leadership means. Some of us have this idea that if I’m a leader I will never apologize. Maybe you had a parent like that. Maybe you had a father who believed that leadership meant that he was never wrong and that he could never apologize for anything because that would actually show weakness in his leadership. And he could not have been further from the truth.

 **Don Nemit:** Amen.

 **Jeff:** Because the bottom line is that a strong leader recognizes his failures and owns them, and repents of them, and then goes on in newness of obedience. That’s the idea behind a genuine leader.

 But let me say it like this. More importantly, that’s behind a gospel-driven leader. You know, that’s the hardest thing in the world, because here’s the deal. I’m going to talk about children for a minute because that’s one of the places where we’re all leaders; if we have kids, we’re leaders. But that’s not the only place where we’re leaders.

 Let me talk to you about that for just a minute. I’ll never forget that when my son was little, sometimes I’d get so frustrated with him, and I’d lose my patience with him. And so then I would have to go back to him and I’d have to say, “Son, I’m sorry. You know, I shouldn’t have done that.” And I would say this: “Daddy is a sinner too, and Daddy needs the gospel.”

 Okay, now that’s good. And I’d do it again. And I’d go back to him and I’d say, “Son, Daddy is sorry. But Daddy is a sinner and Daddy needs the gospel too.” And that was all good. Then I’d do it again. And I would go back to him and I would say the same old thing.

 And do you know what happened to me? What happened to me was that I said to myself, “My son’s gonna think that the gospel doesn’t actually work,” because not only is the gospel there for forgiveness, but the gospel is for transformation. And I started to think to myself: My son is going to think that the gospel is an escape hatch. It’s a get out of jail free card; it’s a pass.

 And so I’ll tell you what that made me do. That made me start to bite my tongue and actually transform my actions before my son, because I said to myself, “You know what? The gospel is for Dad and Dad does need the gospel. He needs forgiveness not just from the Lord but from those he’s offended. But the gospel’s transforming power needs to be evident in me.”

 So then I’m not creating a pattern of sin and then repentance, sin and repentance. I’m creating a pattern of faithfulness, faithfulness, faithfulness.

 And here’s the deal. Along with that I was preaching through Leviticus, and something struck me. It struck me in a way that I had not understood Leviticus before this time. If you had asked me before I preached through Leviticus, if you would have asked me, “What about the sacrificial system?”, I would have said,” You’ve sinned, you take your offering and offer it. You’re forgiven.” Daddy sinned; Daddy’s sorry. Daddy needs the gospel too; that sort of thing. I would have said it like that.

But when I preached through the book of Leviticus I learned something that you can study if you’d like, and that’s this: The sacrificial system was basically there on a day-to-day basis to forgive unintentional sins. Do you realize that there was one day in the year where high-handed rebellious sins were forgiven? That was the Day of Atonement.

 Now that doesn’t mean that high-handed sins weren’t forgiven the rest of the year; they were. But God was saying something through the way He structured the sacrificial system. He was saying that the gospel even in this early stage is transformative, and that your lives should be different from what they were on a day-to-day basis, and that high-handed rebellious sins before your Maker are things that ought to become the exception and never the rule.

 We see this in the New Testament, don’t we? In the New Testament there are incidents of sin and there are patterns of sin. And that’s the difference; that’s the sacrificial difference that we see in the Old Testament.

 And so leading means faithfulness. Following means faithfulness. It doesn’t mean perfection; it means faithfulness.

 I want to narrow this down a bit. He says, *“Be strong and courageous.”* And there is our word: *andridzomai.* There is the verb form of the noun *andridzomai.* This is what we talked about earlier, really at first, maybe five weeks ago or so. I talked to you about this and I said that this is that word that means to be a man. And oftentimes we look at the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and it speaks to us about being courageous, being strong. And we said that’s not the only thing that it means.

 But it means at least that, doesn’t it? We agreed that it means other things, many other things. But it means at least that. It means being strong, it means being a courageous person; it means being a person with heart. *Cour* is the Latin word for heart. Being courageous means being a person of heart.

 The question is, are we people of heart? And I’m not talking about taking up your sword. I’m talking about getting out of bed in the morning and deciding with all of your heart to be faithful to the Lord, to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. That’s what I’m talking about when I’m talking about us being strong and courageous.

 But that also has a flip side to it, doesn’t it? And that flip side is: Do not be in fear. Now you think to yourself that these people going into this land had every reason in the world to fear. And when you think about it, they were fearful people.

 But he says to them, *“Be strong and courageous,”* and on the other hand, *“Do not fear.”* Now when he says, “Do not fear,” in the very best sense he means to have an absence of fear.

 But I’ll tell you that John Wayne is the one who really understands this. He says: *“Courage is being scared to death but settling on it anyway.”* And I said that I got that. Somehow or other I think that fell out of Numbers. *(Laughter)* But do you know that there is a kind of fear that is different from the fear that we often talk about when we talk about phobias. The phobia is the kind of fear that can kind of cover the gamut.

 But there is the kind of fear that we want to stay away from. This is a fear that is cowardly fear. This is the kind of fear that we want to stay absolutely far, far away from. We may have phobias, but we certainly cannot have cowardice.

 Let me give you an example of this. In Mark chapter 4 verse 35 Jesus is in the boat with the disciples. It’s stormy, and this is what it says: *“On that day when evening had come He said to them, ‘Let us go to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat just as He was, and the other boats were with them. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern asleep on the cushion. And they woke Him and said, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’ And He awoke and rebuked the wind and the sea and said, ‘Peace; be still!’”*

 Now listen to this. *“And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’”*

 Now I want you to think about that word for just a minute because it’s an important word. What it means is this. It means: Are you paralyzed to the point of inactivity? Because that storm had paralyzed them. In their mind that storm was the absolute sovereign thing over them, and they were paralyzed. And they had forgotten that God is sovereign over the storm and was with them in the boat, such that He could say at any given time, “Peace; be still!”

 He is the Sovereign. But they had been paralyzed by the storm which they believed was sovereign.

 Now let me tell you something. When He pits that fear against faithfulness, that’s incredible. But I’ll tell you what, that’s not the only place where that is pitted over against faithfulness. Let me take you to another place and I think you’ll be startled. It’s in Revelation 21, and it says this in verse 8.

 *“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable,”* and so on, *“their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”*

 Do you notice that he puts the cowardly and the faithless together? It’s just like Jesus said: “Why are you so cowardly? Where is your faith?” In other words, what is it in your life that has taken the position of God, such that you are paralyzed to be faithful? That’s the question. And that is what could have taken place in the lives of the people of Israel, the church under age.

 What Moses is saying to them is this: Look, don’t be cowardly! Be full of faith as you enter in, knowing that God is with you; the Lord is with you. And that’s what we need to be like. And I think the perfect example of that is here in the boat.

 Secondly, when you go into the land. The structure continues when you go into the land. I said that there are the people and there is Joshua. And then in 9-13 he adds the priests.

 Now this is important because I said to you earlier “like people, like priests.” This is what one prophet had said. And the question is: What is the role of the priest? And the role of a priest is what? The role of a priest is to read the law to all men, women and children. Why? And the answer is right there in the text, and I’ll tell you what the answer is. It’s so that they might fear the Lord.

 Now isn’t that something? As leaders, as priests over them, what they are to do is not to fear who is in that land. But when they go into the land they are to be taught to fear the right thing; they are taught to fear the Lord. And you know, my friends, I think that is that with us as men I don’t think you can get something that is more pivotal than that, because I think that all of our lives we sort of vacillate between fearing the wrong thing and fearing the right thing. And I think what he’s saying to us is absolutely crystal clear, even though it’s probably more difficult than anything that we’ll ever learn. But we need not to fear what is over there.

 I mean, think about that. They are fearing people who are tribal warriors who spent their entire lives fighting one another. And they’re going to go into that land and conquer it. There are giants in that land.

 “We can’t go in there!” That was their first attempt. “We can’t go in; they are giants!”

 “Don’t fear what is in that land. But when you go into that land, fear Me.” I think that’s absolutely vital.

 And also they are taught to obey, right? There is a transformed life that results from the gospel. And here’s the interesting thing; this is what God says to them. “I’m putting you in the land so that you will be different from the land.”

 I said to you that I made a big deal earlier that we’re different. I don’t have much time to break it down, but I want you to hear me say that we are different, and we’re supposed to be! And so when you think, I’m different; this is setting me off, yes. That’s exactly what it’s supposed to do.

 And then I want you to think about this. Wasn’t this Jesus’ commission? Isn’t it interesting? Twice he says to the people, *“The LORD goes with you; He will not leave you nor forsake you.”* Then he says to Joshua, *“He will not leave you nor forsake you.”*

 And then at the end of Matthew’s Gospel in chapter 28, do you remember what Jesus said? *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* “I will not leave you nor forsake you.” Be strong and listen to the Lord.

 We need to stand on God’s promise. Let me make sure we cover this. The promise is that He will not leave you nor forsake you, and that’s wonderful. But here is the thing that we oftentimes forget. He advances; He goes before us.

 You know, this is the thing that I think is most staggering, and yet most refreshing. Oftentimes in life, if you’re paying attention, you realize that once you get to a providential appointment with a particular incident that God has already been there. Whether it’s people that He placed there, whether it’s particular means that He has placed there, whatever it happens to be, He has been there already.

 Many times this may be the case with you. I’ve heard many of you say stuff like this. “I walked up to So-and-So and gave them x amount of money.” The person said, “I needed exactly what was given to me.” You see, God is not only there for you, but God has put you there for others. And that’s the beauty of it. God advances, and He advances by His people. He advances by His people who have been led, and He will not abandon us; He will not desert us.

 Let me finish up by putting that promise on the board. It’s the beginning of Matthew. *“The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel,” which means “”God with us.”*

 And then Matthew’s Gospel closes out saying, “Go into the land and disciple the nations. And don’t be fearful.” Why? Because *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* “Teach those people in the land to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Be different from that land.” Eventually that land will be different from itself.

 That’s the idea in Matthew 28. “Be strong; I have authority. Teach all that I command you. Obey and do not fear.” Why? Because He is with us.

 Well I think that is a good place to end our series on being men. So let me close us out with prayer.

 Father, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. We ask that Your hand would be upon us for good and that You would strengthen us, Lord. Strengthen us to be Your men in this world that is so different from Your commandments. Yet let us be unswerving in our obedience to them, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

 **Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*