

Strong & Courageous & Faithful

No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For **I will be with you** as I was with Moses. **I will not fail you or abandon you.** “**Be strong and courageous,** for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. **Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey** all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. **Study this Book** of instruction continually. **Meditate on it day and night** so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—**be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**” (Joshua 1:5-9)

I. Introduction:

- a. Second only to the Muslim nations, Japan has the lowest number of Christians, always only 1-2% of the population.
- b. El Estero church is a ministry that God started 115 years ago to the Japanese Americans in the Monterey peninsula, and it has continued to this day.
- c. However, El Estero is going through a time of transition.
 - i. You are in the process of searching for a new pastor.
 - ii. You are transitioning from the COVID on-line format back to in person worship and perhaps a long term hybrid format.
 - iii. As with all churches, some members have passed on, others have moved on, and others have started to come.
 - iv. **How does all this make you feel?**

II. In the Scripture passage today the nation of Israel is also at a turning point, a time of transition.

- a. Israel journey from slavery in Egypt to return home to the Promised Land
 - i. 1st try failed: Land is fruitful and flowing with milk and honey, BUT
 1. 10 spies saying THEY are big and strong; WE can't do it.
 2. Joshua & Caleb said THEY are big, but our GOD is bigger.
 - ii. 2nd chance — Moses pastored a church of 1 million members, and he informed them he will not be able to lead them into the promised land.
 1. The giants were still there; they were still big and strong.
 2. Only Joshua and Caleb (85 yo) from the original group were able to enter. **What made them different?**
 - a. They followed God with their whole heart.
 - b. They spoke the truth even though they were in the minority.
 - c. They believed that what they were unable to do in their own strength, God would enable them to overcome.
- b. El Estero is in a very similar situation.
 - i. We have been through the Pastor search processes before.

- ii. We face the same challenges that were present before.
 - iii. What we need are people like Joshua and Caleb.
 - 1. People who follow Jesus with their whole heart.
 - 2. You may say, “but I’m old and retired”.
 - 3. But Caleb was 85 yo when he said to Joshua that he has the same faith and strength as when he was 45.
- III. Let us study this passage by looking at what is repeated 3 times.
 - a. The importance of repetition
 - i. Important, More important, Most important.
 - ii. Truly, truly. And Holy, holy, holy.
 - b. What is repeated 3 times in this passage?**
- IV. GOD’s promise to be with us:
 - a. **No one will be able to stand against you** as long as you live. For **I will be with you** as I was with Moses.
 - i. As the Israelites entered the promised land, they had many battles to fight. While we live in this sin cursed world in a sin cursed body, we will have to struggle and fight many battles as well.
 - ii. But God promises to be with us and... **If God is for us, who can be against us?** (Romans 8:31). **Moses vs Pharaoh.**
 - iii. **He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.** (1 John 4:4)
We against **the world, the flesh, and Satan.**
 - b. **I will not fail you or abandon you.**
 - i. When we put our trust and faith in people, we are easily discouraged when people reject and abandon us. **Has that happened to you?**
 - ii. Our God is a FAITHFUL God and He has promised us “I will not fail you or abandon you.
 - 1. **Are you feeling anxious or weak?** –
 - a. “Don’t be afraid, for **I am with you.** Don’t be discouraged, for **I am your God.** I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)
 - b. “**He will keep you strong** to the end. **God,** who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, **is faithful.**” (I Cor 1:8-9)
 - 2. When we sin, God is faithful and ready to forgive – “If we confess our sins, **he is faithful** and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9)
 - 3. **God’s Promises** – “The **LORD is faithful** to all his promises.” (Ps 145:13) **What is the implication if God is not “faithful” with His promises?**
 - c. **For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**
 - i. **Jesus:** I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

- ii. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you **another Helper**, that He may abide with you forever— (John 14:16)
 - iii. **Are you able to truly believe that you will never be alone?**
 - iv. Whenever you feel and see that you are all alone.... Remember
 - 1. You don't see anyone with you, but Hebrews 11 tells us that **FAITH is what allows us to see what cannot be seen.**
 - 2. **FAITH is simply believing in God's Word**
 - a. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. **Do you Believe it?**
 - b. Jesus has promised "I am with you always, to the end of the age." **Do you believe it?**
 - v. If you do, whenever you feel lonely, talk to God, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit; pour out your heart to Him; ask Him for His strength, Thank Him and praise Him. I have been there and done that and it works!
- V. **What else is repeated 3 times?** OUR PART is to be strong, courageous!
- a. **Be strong and courageous**, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.
 - i. **Are we to be strong and courageous physically, emotionally or spiritually?**
 - ii. To be strong spiritually is to have strong FAITH in GOD.
 - b. **Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey** all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. **Then you will be SUCCESSFUL in everything you do. Study this Book** of instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and **SUCCEED in all you do.**
 - i. It is very easy to follow the way of the world. The land they were about to enter was filled with idol worship and many different beliefs that would make God's people stray away from faith in the One True God.
 - ii. We are also in the midst of a culture that Isaiah described this way: **What sorrow for those who say that evil is good and good is evil, that dark is light and light is dark, that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter. What sorrow for those who are wise in their own eyes and think themselves so clever.** (Isaiah 5:20-21)
 - iii. **Read, Study and Obey** God's Word; Do not go off course. That is the means or pathway to success and victory.
 - c. This is my command— **be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged.**
 - i. **It is a COMMAND we are to OBEY** in order to succeed.
 - ii. Whenever you are fearful or discouraged, remember God has promised to be with you wherever you are and wherever you go. And we are to obey His command to keep our FAITH in Him Strong and Courageous.

- VI. In what ways are WE Called to be FAITHFUL?
- a. Faithfulness in **Problems**
 - i. **we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.** (2 Cor 4:16) God is more focused on the inward person.
 - ii. Being Faithful in the midst of adversity is to keep on walking by faith.
 - b. Faithfulness in **Prayer**
 - i. **Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,** (Luke 18:1) **what if your prayers are not answered?**
 - ii. Being Faithful in Prayer means we keep praying.
 - c. Faithfulness in **Good Works**
 - i. **And let us not grow weary while doing good,** for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal 6:9-10)
 - ii. as for you, brethren, **do not grow weary in doing good.** (2 Thess 3:13)
 - iii. **Do you get discouraged when you are not appreciated for all the work you do? When you don't see the church grow in spite of all you do?**
 - iv. It's a human pride thing to focus on numbers. If there is only 10 people left in this church, maybe God is calling you to take care of 10 sheep. Being Faithful in Good Works is to know that we do it for the Lord, to please God and not men.
 - d. Faithfulness in **Witness.** *Bringing results (conversion) from the witness is something only God can do, but giving the witness is something we must do.*
 - e. It is God who will keep us growing in our faith – **“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and HE will do it.”** (I Thess 5:23-24)
- VII. Conclusion
- a. Faithfulness is not contingent on results.
 - i. We are faithful in prayer even when it seems the prayers are not answered.
 - ii. We are faithful in witnessing even when there is no immediate result.
 - iii. We are faithful in serving even when we are not appreciated, and we don't see any growth in numbers.
 - b. We are not welcome into heaven with “What were you able to accomplish?” Not with “did you grow the membership?” But with.... **His master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.”** (Matt 25:21)
 - c. Be Strong and Courageous. Have Faith in God and be Faithful.