

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

By Jerry L. Henderson

In Joshua chapter three, the children of Israel, God's chosen people, were marching toward the promised land and had now come to a situation that looked impossible. They had come to the Jordan River and it was now at flood stage. In the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan River there are a number of lessons to be learned. We, as God's people today, are marching toward the promised land, heaven, and we too find obstacles that look impossible for us to cross or overcome. As we look at Israel's crossing of the flooded Jordan River, maybe we can learn some lessons that will help us in overcoming the problems which come up in our life.

As Israel waded out into this flooded river, it is evident that they had a lot of faith in God's word. God had said when the priests stepped out in the Jordan the waters would part so that they could walk across on dry land. This was the only way possible for them to cross, because, remember, the river was at flood stage and the number of the Israelites with women and children was somewhere between two and three million, because the number of men was six hundred thousand. For this great number of people along with all their belongings and their flocks and herds to attempt such a crossing would require a great deal of faith. However, they did just what God said and they were able to overcome this seemingly impossible situation.

Yes, they had faith, but this was not a blind faith. It was based on a command from God. So, we not only learn a lesson about faith but also one about obedience to God's word. The book of James teaches us that faith and obedience are inseparable (James 2:26). For us to expect God's help in overcoming problems in our lives we must be obedient to God's word. If the faith of these Israelites had not led them to obey they would never have been able to cross the Jordan. So, must our faith lead us to obey God's word? Remember, Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him (Heb 5:9).

Also, involved in this account is a lesson on the influence that we can have over others for good. The priests had a great influence on the Israelites. The people followed their leadership. The demonstration of the faith which the priests had in wading out in the Jordan River at the command of God was a strengthening influence on the people. Also, the people had a good influence on each other, because they all left their tents and followed. Had either the priest refused to go or the people refused to follow they would not have crossed over into the promised land. The Lord made provisions in His body today for leadership. This leadership (elders) is a tremendous help in overcoming many problems which we face today as we strive to reach the promised land. However, for elders to lead people must follow and for people to follow, elders must lead. So, you see, as we demonstrate our faith by our obedience, we have a good influence over others, just as these Israelites, in helping to overcome obstacles.

But let's notice also a lesson from this account concerning the truthfulness and power of God's word. God made a promise to Israel that when the priests' feet were in the water the Jordan would cease to flow (Josh 3:13). It happened just like God said it would. When God speaks, His word is true and powerful (Jhn 17:17; Heb 4:12). All of God's promises will come true. God has promised us salvation, the promised land, just as He did to the Israelites at the Jordan. However, like the promise to Israel, this promise is conditional. We must believe in the promise strong enough to "wade out into the Jordan," that is, to

do what God says. In our obedience to the Gospel we do exactly what God says: Believe in Christ (Heb 11:6); Repent of our sins (Lk 13:3); Confess Jesus as the Christ (Rom 10:10); and we are Baptized for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). Then we must live faithful to the Lord in worshipping and serving Him for the rest of our life. If one becomes unfaithful to Him, the Scripture teaches repentance and prayer in order that the person might be forgiven (Acts 8:22), thereby re-establishing the fellowship which was broken. You see, the only way God will help us in overcoming obstacles is for us to render faithful obedience to Him.