

The Lord is the God of our future

Military scouts gather information about the enemy, terrain, and weather to help commanders make decisions about how to move troops and when to attack. When Moses sent the twelve men into Canaan to spy out the land, he basically sent them in as scouts. Later Joshua sent two men to scout the land. The scouts that Moses sent out came back with an encouraging report of what the land was like, but discouraged the people as they looked at their own strength against the strength of the people of the land. The scouts that Joshua sent out came back with confidence that God would give them the land. However, ultimately it's God who assured the people that He would go before them. This was the greatest assurance that they had for what lay ahead of them and it's our greatest assurance for us for what lies in our future.

Deuteronomy 31:8 It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

1) An assurance for the future

- We often face the future with a bit of fear and trepidation, some more than others depending on your circumstances.
- The Israelites arrived at the border of Canaan, the land that God had promised them
 - They knew that the present residents of Canaan weren't going to hand them the land on a platter – How was this going to work out?
 - God had been providing them with manna for 40 years – Would He continue providing for them miraculously?
 - They had been living in tents – Where would they live now?
 - Moses was their leader for 40 years in the wilderness – will there be a leadership crisis after entering the land
- We might be facing our own fears for the future
 - Job insecurity
 - How to repay debt that we've got ourselves into
 - Accommodation
 - Relationship issues
 - The unknown future
- Whatever we're facing or not sure what lies ahead, God has given us this assurance:
 - Deuteronomy 31:8 It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you.
- This wasn't the first time that God was going before Israel
 - Deuteronomy 1:30-31 The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.
 - We need to remember the times in our past when God had gone before us, fought our battles, and brought us through them
- We need to know our God who goes before us in order to have the assurance for the future
 - Our God who is omnipotent – all powerful – and no issue that we face is bigger than Him
 - Our God is the provider, and He will provide all of our needs in the future
 - Our God is relational and will work in our relationship problems
 - Our God is our light into the unknown
 - Our God cares and understands our fears and insecurities and reassures us that He has us in the palm of His hand
- When God goes ahead of us it's for:
 - Our protection
 - Our guidance
 - Our victory
- Ultimately, Jesus has gone before us into death and rising again so breaking the power of death over our lives
 - Hebrews 6:19-20 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf.

2) A strength for the future

- Deuteronomy 31:8 He will not leave you or forsake you.
- When Jesus gave His ultimate commission to His disciples He said the same thing:
 - Matthew 28:20 And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
- The strength that we have isn't in ourselves but in Him who will always be with us.
- When God goes ahead of us it doesn't mean that we won't have a battle in the future. It means that we don't put our confidence in ourselves, but in Him when facing what lies ahead
 - God promised to go ahead of Israel into the promised land, but they still had to fight for the land after entering it
 - Jesus has gone before us facing every trial and temptation that we face, overcame death and entered into heaven itself, but we still battle the trials and temptations of life.
 - Often we look at our own personal resources and strength against what we are facing and realise that we are hopelessly inadequate to face our trials, but then we look to the fact that God is with us in the same way that, in the Narnia series book, Prince Caspian, young Lucy stands alone against the enemy army holding a small dagger. Then Aslan, a depiction of Christ, comes and stands with her and she then smiles knowing that He'll take care of the army in front of her
- We need to be in the Lord to be strong in Him
 - Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
- We are so often told to be strong, but God delights in our weakness
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- He is our strength and song. The one who saves us
 - Exodus 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.
- He is our strong tower where we can run to when we need a refuge – protection
 - Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.
- He gives us the strength to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.
 - Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
- He strengthens us by filling us with His joy regardless of our circumstances
 - Nehemiah 8:10 And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.
- We find strength in His Word
 - Psalms 119:28 My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!

3) A confidence to face the future

- Deuteronomy 31:8 Do not fear or be dismayed.
 - Fear and being dismayed is a sign of a lack of confidence, but God instructs us not to fear or be dismayed because He will be going before us and will be with us.
 - Jeremiah 17:7 But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.
- When we are fearful and dismayed, we struggle to get things done and be fruitful
- However, confident people are ready to move on in life, take action and do what needs to be done in order to be fruitful regardless of whether our circumstances are right or not.