

Graduation – Time to Move On!

- I. Move on – your Lord is with you!
- II. Move on with confidence.

Dear Christian friends – and especially you the members of this year’s graduating class,

Did you catch what Moses said at the start of this chapter when I read it before? **“I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross the Jordan.’”** Moses was done leading the Israelites but his age had NOTHING TO DO with it. Later on we’re told, **“Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.”** In fact, right before he died Moses climbed Mt. Nebo and there God showed him the Promised Land of Canaan.

These verses mark the start of a NEW CHAPTER for the Israelites. For the past 40 years Moses had faithfully led them. Now Joshua was **taking over**. The Israelites had spent those 40 years WANDERING in the wilderness. **Soon** they would cross the Jordan River and begin the conquest of the Promised Land. Oh, and after all those years NO MORE MANNA for breakfast – lunch – supper. BIG CHANGES were coming. It was time for the Israelites to MOVE ON **under Joshua**.

Tonight you graduate from St. John’s school. Our word graduation comes from the **Latin word** for step. **Graduation** is a BIG STEP in a person’s life. It’s time for you to MOVE ON to a new chapter of your life. Just as for these Israelites that means some BIG CHANGES **from the old and familiar to the new and exciting**. Tonight I encourage you to MOVE ON just as Moses encouraged **Joshua** and these **Israelites**. 1) Your Lord is **with you** so MOVE ON 2) with confidence.

I. Move on – your Lord is with you!

Moses specifically told the ISRAELITES, **“The LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”** Then Moses specifically told JOSHUA, **“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”** Jump ahead to Joshua chapter 1. There God Himself tells Joshua, **“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”** Do you think that they NEEDED TO HEAR that? Do you think WE need to hear it – that YOU **need to hear it as you graduate** and MOVE ON with your life? It’s amazing how many times in the Bible – in both the OT and NT – we HEAR GOD say, **“I am with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

Do you realize the GRACE in those words? Years earlier, for example – when the people had made and were worshipping that **“golden calf”** – God had Moses tell the Israelites, **“I will send an angel before you. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked (i.e., stubborn) people and I might destroy you on the way. If I were to go with you for even a moment, I might destroy you.”** Over those 40 years in the wilderness the Israelites **PROVED again and again** how **“stiff-necked”** and stubborn they could be. Over those 40 years GOD **PROVED again and again** how gracious and forgiving He could be!

Reading the story of the OT Israelites is a lot like looking in a MIRROR – we sure can see ourselves in them. So blessed by God yet HOW QUICKLY they could doubt God’s **love** and question His **ways** and **faithfulness**. HOW OFTEN don’t we hear them grumbling about God’s blessings as if they DESERVED BETTER from God – as if God was doing a LOUSY JOB taking care of them. **How often** INSTEAD OF TRUSTING God’s **ways** and **promises** don’t we find them panicking and **despairing**. IF YOU were God would you have put up with – yes, FORGIVEN them – as much as God forgave them?

ENOUGH is enough, right? What grace – what FORGIVENESS and faithfulness – what patience and understanding are in those words, ***“The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you.”***

That same grace – **forgiveness, faithfulness, patience and understanding** – God HAS LAVISHED on you and me as well. We recall how God RESCUED Israel again and again – how God defeated their enemies for them. **How** can we NOT RECALL even more so how God has rescued us from our sin and guilt and defeated death and the devil for us? It’s time for you to MOVE ON but don’t ever outgrow MARVELING and SAVORING those simple, familiar facts of the gospel!

Rather than justly GIVING UP on us God graciously gave us His own Son Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus doesn’t simply give us a SECOND CHANCE or a SHOVE in the right direction. Jesus took our place under God’s law and He took care of everything to save us. Jesus lived for us that **whole life** of PERFECT love – trust – obedience that we owed God. Jesus took the blame for the sins of the whole world and was punished in our place. **On the cross** Jesus shed His precious blood and sacrificed His own innocent life all to ***“take away the sin of the world.”*** Jesus tops that all off with His triumphant resurrection from the dead and His promise to come again in glory on the Last Day. BECAUSE of Jesus – TRUSTING in Jesus – we have God’s forgiveness of all our sins – **we have a whole new relationship** with God – we are now going straight to heaven when we die. AND its is that very same Lord Jesus who says, ***“Surely I am with you always”*** – or as He says here, ***“I will be with you; I will never leave or forsake you.”*** It is time to MOVE ON – your Lord IS WITH you! That means we can also...

II. Move on with confidence.

You’re graduating tonight – it is **time** to MOVE ON – and as you do you can BE CONFIDENT of this – school and life won’t always be EASY or FAIR – things won’t always go they WAY YOU wanted them to or you had hoped and planned for. **School and life can at times** be very SCARY and HAIRY. **Why** do you think God told Joshua and these Israelites, ***“Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”***? God knew they’d face SITUATIONS and CIRCUMSTANCES that would easily make them ***“afraid”*** and ***“discouraged.”*** They had already faced MANY SUCH circumstances and they’d face more in the coming days and years.

That will also be LIFE FOR YOU – just as it **is/was** for your parents – grandparents – and the generations before them. We’re all sinners living in a **world fallen** under the curse and consequences of sin. That means PAIN and **problems** – sicknesses and **diseases** – accidents and **injuries** – INJUSTICE and what have you. THAT’S LIFE – deal with it – you can’t change or avoid it! DEAL with it by taking to heart God’s Word here, ***“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”***

If you had to move on ON YOUR OWN that would be discouraging and **depressing**. But you’re moving on WITH your Lord – your ALMIGHTY – **gracious** – **faithful** Lord Jesus. The devil wants you to FORGET that. The **devil wants** you to think God has abandoned you – that God has lost control of the world. And at times it MAY SURE LOOK and **feel** like it!

But you can move on with CONFIDENCE. No matter what may **all be happening** in your life you can be confident of God’s love. When you’re TEMPTED TO DOUBT God’s **love** – to question His **ways** and **promises** – go kneel again at the manger – go stand again at Jesus’ **blood-stained** cross – take another good look at Jesus’ empty grave. SAVOR and cling to Paul’s words, ***“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all — how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”*** Rather than WALLOWING in **self-pity** or GIVING WAY to **fear** and **discouragement** EXALT as Paul did, ***“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I***

am convinced that... nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God wants us to BE SO CONFIDENT as we move through life. We deal with LIFE'S **often ugly realities** with the BLESSED REALITIES of God's **love – power – presence – promises**. We don't always understand God – we can't explain everything God **does/allows** – but we can CONFIDENTLY TRUST His Word and promises. God doesn't call us to UNDERSTAND Him but to TRUST Him.

You're graduating tonight. It's time for you to MOVE ON – and as you do BE SURE to take God's Word with you EACH STEP of the way. **Hey**, I get to ask your FAVORITE QUESTION from confirmation class **one more time!** WHAT MEANS did God use to make you a Christian? **What means** does God use to keep you a Christian? WHAT ARE those **means of grace**? Tonight is a first time for you, **Destiny** and **Zach** – I'm not sure for you **Ellie** and **Lydia** – your first time to come to Holy Communion. WHAT A FEAST your Savior has for you **at His table!** WHAT A MIRACLE Jesus does for you **using simple** bread and wine! ***"Take eat – take drink – My body given – My blood shed FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins."*** Come often to this feast. Come faithfully to church. Daily read your Bible and have a devotion. THAT ALONE is the key to MOVING ON through life with your Lord and confident of His love and forgiveness. Your Lord promises you, ***"The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."***
Amen.

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