**Godly Courage**

***5****No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.****6****Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.****7****Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.****8****This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.****9****Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:5-9, ESV)*

 When facing any new challenge, God expects courage and a life faithful to Him. Greetings in the Lord as we take a brief look at God’s expectations of Joshua when he found himself on the banks of the Jordan River, about to cross into the land that God had promised to him and his people. Keeping in mind that this topic is sensitive because of today’s world politics and in general, I invite you to focus on what God is saying, rather than on where Joshua is going to be entering, since we can always obey God’s words, but the events of those days are not directly related to our relationship with Christ today. Thus, God was very clear in His encouragement of Joshua to trust Him and be courageous in the new task for him. My prayer is that we also, as we are about to celebrate our church’s 125th Anniversary, would be courageous in the Lord in this new era for our APC family. Again: when facing any new challenge, God expects courage and a life faithful to Him. Let’s see how that fleshes out…

 God puts us in a new stage of life and expects that we face the realities that will arise during our journeys with trust in Him and courage. Looking at the Scripture passage, we know that Moses the prophet had died and Joshua, his servant was leading Israel to the Jordan River. There, God spoke to Joshua and encouraged him to continue Moses’ work and to enter the Promised Land. However, God’s intention was to bring a landed culture, a stability to a nomadic people, so that they would worship Him and follow His Word. If you noticed, the verses read today were about being courageous and following God’s Law. Yes, it was God that would grant success, but Joshua and the people needed to focus on His Word. They were not to fear, but their focus was also not to be on military battles, but on God’s directions. See how important it was for God that they follow Him, and not their own whims! How important it was that they went forwards trusting God and putting aside their fear, to do whatever God led them to do.

 Someone once said, “Courage means to do that which causes you fear.” Thus, courage is linked to that fear. Yet someone else said that “courage is the perfect sense of the measure of the danger ahead, and the mental willingness to endure it.”

 Today we find ourselves at the cusp of our 125th Anniversary. In a little while we will rejoice, eat together, sing, and remember our past and acknowledge our present. God, however, has invited us into a new era, in which there may come obstacles, ups and downs and various new realities. What we are called to do is to be courageous and remain in faith as to God’s identity and presence among us. What we are called to do is to cling to His Word as we navigate the waves through and over the waves of life in faith. What we are to do is to allow God to cause changes within and among us through His Holy Spirit for His glory, for our flourishing and spiritual growth.

 God puts us in a new stage of life and expects that we face the realities that will arise during our journeys with trust in Him and courage. When facing any new challenge, God expects courage and a life faithful to Him. May God pour out His Spirit, that we may face the challenges of this new Promised Land, this new time period with faith and courage. May the Lord bless you all. Amen.