

Armed for Battle 3

Text: Joshua 3

Introduction – A Threshold Moment

Church, we are now in Week 3 of our *Armed for Battle* series, and today we arrive at a threshold moment — not only in Israel's journey, but in ours.

Israel has left the wilderness.

The promise is in sight.

Jericho is visible.

The enemy is aware.

And yet — no battle is fought.

Why?

Because God does not rush His people into warfare until they are spiritually positioned.

Before external battles, there must be internal alignment.

Before warfare, identity.

Before strategy, surrender.

Before victory, consecration.

Because warfare in the kingdom of God never begins with swords. It begins with surrender.

Many believers want God to move quickly into breakthrough, but throughout Scripture God consistently works from the inside out.

Before He advances His people externally, He aligns them internally.

Before He gives territory,

He establishes identity.

Before He releases victory,

He forms surrender.

Joshua 3 shows us something profound:

Before Israel faces Jericho,
before they fight a single battle,
before they take one city —
God prepares their hearts.

Because before God gives victory through His people, He does a deep work within His people.

And I believe many of us are standing in a similar place today.

Not in wilderness anymore.
But not fully in possession yet.

Standing at the edge of promise.
Standing at the edge of change.
Standing at the edge of what God is about to do.

And the question is not first:
“How do we fight?”

The question is:
“Are we spiritually prepared for where God is taking us?”

Warfare principle for today:

Victories begin with surrender to the heavenly Commander.
Submission always comes before resisting the enemy.

Joshua 3 shows us how God prepares a people before He advances a people. And what He did with Israel then, He still does with His people now.

Joshua 3:1(NLT)

1 Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing.

Israel is standing at the edge of promise — but also at the edge of battle.

And what God does in these chapters teaches us how He prepares His people for

spiritual warfare in every generation. God prepares a people internally before He advances them externally.

1. The Principle of the Presence

2 *Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp,*

3 *giving these instructions to the people:*

"When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, move out from your positions and follow them.

4 Since you have never travelled this way before, they will guide you. ...

14 So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them.

Before Israel takes one step forward, God establishes something first:

My presence must lead you.

The Ark of the Covenant represented the manifest presence of God among His people.

It was not merely symbolic furniture.

It represented God's throne, God's nearness, and God's leadership.

Israel was not to move when they felt ready.

They were not to move when conditions seemed favourable.

They were to move when the Presence moved.

"Since you have never travelled this way before, they will guide you."

This was new territory.

New warfare.

New responsibility.

New season.

And God was making something unmistakably clear:

If My presence does not lead you, you are not ready to go.

Remember David?

2 Samuel 11:1 (NIV)

*In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, **David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army.** They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.*

2 Samuel 11:10-11 (NIV)

David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home?”

*Uriah said to David, “**The ark** and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are **camped in the open country.** How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”*

He sent the Ark out into the open country. He remained in Jerusalem. That's when He made the big blunder in his life that impacted his kingdom, legacy and generations after him. He sent the ark out of his life.

David did not wake up one morning and say:

“I think I will remove God’s presence from my life.”

No one does that consciously.

But Scripture shows us something sobering:

You can slowly move God’s presence to the margins
while still calling yourself a believer.

You can still be king —

but no longer be led by the Presence.

So how do we, today,

send the Ark out of our lives?

Not always by rebellion.

Often by **neglect, distraction, and subtle displacement.**

a. We send the Ark out through prayerlessness

The Ark represented God's nearness and leadership.

When prayer becomes optional rather than essential,
we begin to move through life without reference to His presence.

Not rebellion.

Just independence.

We start making decisions without inquiring of the Lord.

We stop pausing to listen.

We rely on experience instead of presence.

And slowly — quietly —

the Ark moves ahead...

and we remain behind.

b. We send the Ark out when activity replaces intimacy

David was still king.

Still ruling.

Still functioning.

But he was no longer spiritually attentive.

It is possible to remain busy in ministry, family, leadership, and life
while drifting from the Presence that must lead it all.

We can be:

- productive but not prayerful
- active but not aligned
- successful but spiritually dull

When activity replaces intimacy,
we may still carry responsibility —
but we no longer carry presence.

c. We send the Ark out when we step out of our God-given season

Scripture says:

“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war... David remained in Jerusalem.”
(2 Sam 11:1)

He stepped out of his assignment.

He stepped out of his season.

He stepped out of his place.

And when you step out of the place of obedience,
you also step away from the place of protection.

Many spiritual falls do not begin with temptation.

They begin with **misalignment**.

Being where you are not meant to be.

Doing what you are not meant to be doing.

Neglecting what you are called to carry.

d. We send the Ark out when we remove accountability

David sent Joab — the one man who could challenge him.

Isolation is spiritually dangerous.

When we remove:

- wise counsel
- spiritual authority
- honest voices
- people who can correct us

we create space for self-deception.

God often protects us through people.

When we distance ourselves from those voices,
we distance ourselves from one of the ways God keeps us aligned.

e. We send the Ark out through hidden compromise

David didn't fall when he saw Bathsheba.

He fell long before that moment.

He fell when:

- he disengaged from purpose
- he neglected presence
- he embraced comfort over calling

By the time temptation came, alignment had already been lost.

We rarely lose the sense of God's presence suddenly.

It usually happens gradually:

- one neglected prayer time
- one compromised decision
- one slow drift
- one season of spiritual distraction

until eventually we wake up and realize:

The Ark has moved...

and we are no longer following closely.

"The greatest danger in the life of a believer is not open rebellion — it is gradual distance from the Presence.

Because when the Presence no longer leads, we become vulnerable to things that once would never have overtaken us."

Reflection Question

Where in your life has the Presence of God slowly moved from central to occasional?

Not because you rejected Him —
but because life became full, busy, heavy, distracted?

How do you send the Ark out of your life?

And what would it look like to bring the Ark back to the centre?

This is why Joshua begins here:

“Follow the Ark.”

Because victory does not begin with strategy.

It begins with staying close to the Presence.

The priests had to carry the Ark — the symbol of God’s presence — into danger, not around it.

But notice this detail many miss:

The Ark did not lead the people all the way across.

The priests stopped in the middle of the river, holding the Ark high while the entire nation crossed.

Two million people passed by while God’s presence stood between Egypt and promise.

“God didn’t just make a way — He held the way open until everyone crossed.”

It would have taken from 12 hours to a full day for everyone to cross.

Imagine that scene.

The priests standing in the riverbed.

The Ark lifted high.

Water held back by divine command.

An entire nation passing through.

This crossing was not just geographical — it was spiritual.

God’s presence stood between their past and their future.

Between wilderness and inheritance.

Between survival and promise.

Throughout Scripture, God uses Israel's journey as a pattern for ours.

And just as Israel stepped out of wilderness survival and into inheritance living when they crossed the Jordan, we too must step out of old patterns and walk in newness of life to take hold of the promises of God.

Christological Depth

The Ark represented the presence of God among His people.

Under the new covenant, God's presence no longer dwells in an ark — He dwells within His people by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16). We are now led not by a symbol of presence, but by the indwelling presence of Christ Himself.

Jesus is Immanuel — God with us.

He is the true presence of God leading His people into promise.

Just as Israel followed the Ark into the waters,
we follow Christ through death into life.

New Testament Parallel

Paul explains it this way:

"We were buried with Him through baptism into death... that we should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

Crossing the Jordan represents:

- Death to the old life
- Leaving wilderness patterns behind
- Transitioning from wilderness Christianity to inheritance Christianity

The Christian life is not just about leaving Egypt.

It is about entering promise.

It is about walking in newness of life through Christ.

So the questions become deeply personal:

- What aspects of your life do you need to let go of?

- What patterns of living do you need to replace in order to take hold of what God has for you?
- How can you cultivate more of Him and His Presence in your life?

Because victory in spiritual warfare does not begin with striving.

It begins with following the Presence.

Where in your life has the Presence of God slowly moved from central to occasional?"

Don't answer quickly. Just sit with the Lord for a moment.

2. The Principle of Consecration

Before Israel steps into the river, Joshua gives a command:

Joshua 3:5 (NIV)

Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."

The Hebrew word here is *kadash* — to be set apart, sacred, devoted.

This is not about moral perfection.

This is about readiness.

This is not yet about covenant marking — that comes later.

This is about spiritual positioning.

Consecration here is **preparation before encounter**.

It is:

- readiness
- expectancy
- positioning
- spiritual preparation before breakthrough

They consecrate themselves before seeing the miracle.

This is pre-battle consecration — preparing to encounter God and step into promise.

For forty years Israel lived largely isolated in the wilderness.

Now they were about to enter the hornet's nest of pagan culture and warfare.

Before warfare, God wanted spiritual attentiveness.

Before miracles, God wanted readiness.

Consecration says:

Lord, align my heart.

Quiet my flesh.

Make me attentive to You.

Prepare me for what You are about to do.

They consecrate themselves before the waters part.

Before they see evidence.

Before they step forward.

Because God prepares His people internally before He moves externally.

Example 1: Moses at the Burning Bush

(Exodus 3–4)

Theme: Holy ground before holy assignment

Moses had a calling on his life.

Deliverer.

Leader.

Nation-shaper.

But before Moses could step into assignment,

God called him into consecration.

At the burning bush, God says:

“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” (Exo 3:5)

Before instruction
came reverence.

Before assignment
came alignment.

Before public ministry
came private consecration.

God did not first give Moses strategy for Pharaoh.
He first established posture before God.

Because you cannot carry holy assignment
with casual spiritual posture.

Some of us want God to move quickly.

But God first says:
Slow down.
Remove the sandals.
Become aware of My presence.
Consecrate your heart again.

Because what you are stepping into
is holy.

Holy assignments require holy attentiveness.

Example 2 - Jacob at Peniel

(Genesis 32:22–31)

Theme: God changes us before He changes our season

Before Jacob stepped into his new season,
before reconciliation with Esau,
before stepping into promise fully —

God stopped him.

Not to bless him externally first.
But to transform him internally.

Genesis 32 tells us Jacob wrestled with God through the night.

And what is striking is this:
God touched his hip and wounded him
before He blessed him.

Why?

Because Jacob could not enter his next season
as the same man he had been.

He could not step into promise
still relying on manipulation, control, and self-effort.

So God consecrated him through encounter.

He walked away limping —
but renamed.
Marked.
Changed.

Israel.

Some of us want breakthrough
without inner transformation.

But God often says:
Before I change your circumstances,
I will change your heart.
Before I release promise,
I will deepen surrender.

Consecration is not God delaying you.
It is God preparing you.

**You may walk into your next season with a limp —
but you will also walk in blessing and a new identity.**

Christological Depth

Consecration in the Old Testament points forward to the deeper consecration we have in Christ.

Through Christ we are made holy — set apart for God.
But we are also called to live in ongoing consecration.

Not to earn God's favour.
But to remain spiritually attentive and aligned.

Consecration is not about earning breakthrough.
It is about preparing to recognize and walk in what God is about to do.

Ephesians reminds us that our warfare is not merely natural:

“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood...”

Which means:

- We don't win spiritual battles with fleshly methods
- We don't overcome temptation with willpower alone
- We don't walk in authority while spiritually distracted

Consecration does not make us acceptable to God — Christ has already done that.
Consecration positions us to walk in what Christ has already secured.

Consecration says:

“Lord, make me ready for what You are about to do.”

Not perfect.
But attentive.
Not striving.
But aligned.

Because when God moves,
He looks for prepared hearts.

Once Israel has consecrated themselves internally,
God now calls them to step forward practically.

Consecration prepares the heart.
Obedience moves the feet.

And often, obedience must come before visible breakthrough. God prepares a people internally before He advances them externally.

Which leads us to the next principle...

3. The Principle of Obedience

Consecration prepares the heart.
Now obedience moves the feet.

15 It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, 16 the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho.

This detail matters.

It was flood season.
Spring rains had swollen the river.
It was an impossible and impassable situation.

From a human perspective, it was the worst possible time to cross.

And yet God said:

“When the soles of the priests’ feet touch the water, the river will stop.”

Not before.

As they step.

Generally God requires obedience before the miracle manifests.

God often requires obedience before understanding.

God doesn’t have to choose the time or route or season that makes sense logically to us as humans.

Generally God doesn’t have to choose the easiest or most possible way.

It was only once the priests stepped into the river that the water started backing up.

And then — it didn’t back up where they could see the evidence.

It backed up a great distance away near Zarethan.

They couldn’t see the water like a wall.

Commentators point out something important here:

- The timing was exact
- The river was at flood stage
- The water stood in place for hours
- The muddy riverbed dried immediately

15 The LORD had said to Joshua,

16 “Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come up out of the riverbed.”

17 So Joshua gave the command.

18 As soon as the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant came up out of the riverbed and their feet were on high ground, the water of the Jordan returned and overflowed its banks as before.

The water returned the moment the priests stepped out.

This was not coincidence.

This was divine intervention.

But notice the pattern:

God did not part the river before they stepped.
He parted it as they obeyed.

Some of us are facing impossible situations. But impossible to man is not difficult to God.

Example 1 — Naaman Washing in the Jordan

(2 Kings 5:1–14)

Theme: Breakthrough often sits on the other side of simple obedience

Naaman wanted healing.

But when the prophet told him to wash in the Jordan seven times, he almost missed his miracle.

Why?

Because the instruction felt too simple.

Too humbling.

Too illogical.

He expected dramatic.

He received simple.

He expected spectacular.

He received necessity of simple obedience.

And Scripture says:

He turned away angry.

He almost walked away from healing
because it didn't seem impressive enough.

But when he finally humbled himself
and obeyed exactly as instructed,

his flesh was restored
like that of a child.

Some of us are waiting for a big breakthrough.

And God is saying:

It is waiting on the other side
of simple obedience.

Not dramatic obedience.

Not public obedience.

Simple obedience.

Never underestimate what God will release through simple obedience.

Example 2 - Peter Stepping Out of the Boat

(Matthew 14:22–33)

Theme: You cannot walk on what you refuse to step onto

Peter saw Jesus walking on water.

And he said:

“Lord, if it is You, command me to come.”

Jesus said one word:

“Come.”

That was it.

No explanation.

No guarantees.

No safety briefing.

Just:

Come.

Peter had a choice:

Stay in the boat of certainty

or step into the uncertainty of obedience.

And the moment his foot touched the water,
he did what was impossible
for those who stayed in the boat.

He walked on what should have swallowed him.

Here is the truth:
You cannot walk on water
while staying in the boat.

You cannot experience supernatural provision
while living in natural caution.

You cannot step into what God has for you
without stepping out of what feels safe.

Some miracles only exist outside the boat.

Christological Depth

Jesus Himself walked in perfect obedience to the Father.
And through union with Christ, we are called into that same obedience of faith.

Obedience is not legalism.
Obedience is alignment.

Obedience is how faith moves.
Obedience is how faith walks.

True obedience flows from faith, not fear; from relationship, not religion; from union with Christ, not self-effort.

What has God already told you to do, that you are holding out on for perfect conditions?

*7 The LORD told Joshua,
"Today I will begin to make you a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites.
They will know that I am with you, just as I was with Moses.*

8 Give this command to the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant: 'When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop there.'"

God often confirms His presence through obedience — not before it.

Conclusion

Joshua 3 is not just about crossing a river.

It is about how God prepares His people for the battles that lie ahead.

Before Jericho...

Before warfare...

Before strategy...

God establishes:

His presence.

Consecration.

Obedience.

Because God works from internal to external. God prepares a people internally before He advances them externally.

Before external battles — internal alignment.

Before warfare — identity.

Before victory — surrender.

Some of you feel like you are standing at a threshold.

You are no longer where you were.

But you are not fully where you are going.

You feel the transition.

You sense the shift.

You know something is changing.

But here is what Joshua 3 teaches us:

When God is preparing you internally, it is not because He has delayed your future. It is because He is preparing you for it. God is not restricting you. He is preparing you. Because what He is about to do through you requires a deeper work within you.

And the invitation today is simple:

- Will we allow God to prepare us before He advances us?
- Consecrate us before He promotes us?
- Align us before He releases us?

Church, this is not a message about trying harder. This is a message about aligning deeper. Because when a people align internally... God opens rivers externally. And I believe many of you are standing at a Jordan right now...

Altar Call

This is not a moment of pressure.

This is a moment of alignment.

Ask the Holy Spirit to gently put His finger on your heart.

1. Presence

- Have I allowed the presence of God to lead my life?
- Or have I moved ahead based on pressure, fear, or urgency?
- Are there ways I have unintentionally sent the ark ahead of me — neglecting time with God, crowding out His voice, living without His nearness?

Today may be a moment to realign with His presence.

2. Consecration

Is God calling me into deeper consecration?

Not perfection. Not striving. But attentiveness.

- Is there distraction He is asking me to lay down?

- Noise He is asking me to quiet?
- A heart posture He is asking me to surrender?

Consecration is not about earning breakthrough. It is about being ready for what God is about to do.

3. Obedience

Is there an area where God has already spoken — but I am waiting for clearer conditions?

- A step of obedience I have delayed?
- A surrender I have postponed?
- A trust step I have avoided?

The waters did not part when they discussed. They parted when they stepped.