

Our Inertia

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 July 2016

Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 00] Well, I want to begin this morning with a little bit of a physics lesson. There's a concept in the study of physics called inertia. And inertia, basically, is the tendency of matter to continue unchanged in its present state unless it's affected by an outside force.

So, basically, I've got a pen here somewhere. If I put this highlighter here on the pulpit, okay, now that's defeating the purpose of my illustration.

There. If I put it there on the pulpit, unless I knock it off, or unless some outside force comes like a wind or something, it's going to stay there unchanged. It's got no desire to move. It's quite happy just to lay there on the pulpit until the end of time.

But if an outside force comes and moves it, then it'll move. Now it'll stay there for the rest of my sermon, probably, unless an outside force comes. That's the concept of inertia.

It's the property of matter which prevents it from changing unless forced to do so. So, to give you an example, a good example of inertia is trying to get a teenager out of bed. All right?

[1 : 03] So, parents of teenagers, you know what I mean? Unless there's a very convincing force like, I don't know, frying bacon in the kitchen or something to draw them out of bed, they're just going to stay there.

Well, it's not just pens and teenagers in bed, though. Anyway, the truth is we are all prone to a form of inertia, aren't we? The resistance to change that humans tend to have.

This natural tendency just to stay where we are in life, even if it's not a good place for us. You know what I mean? Humans all have this inertia, this resistance to change, because to change our situation will always require some kind of sacrifice, sacrifice of what we're familiar with, sacrifice of what's comfortable.

And it often just takes too much effort to change, even if it's the best thing for us, because we all are prone to this form of human inertia. Well, this is very much the experience of the Israelites in the Bible, when we track their history.

The Israelites were a nation that God chose and rescued out of slavery in Egypt, and His promise to them was that they were going to live in a very special place, a special land, a beautiful land with everything they needed.

[2 : 18] And most importantly, more than the blessings of this land that they could call their own and live in, most importantly, they were going to be in right relationship with God. They were going to live in fellowship with God in this land, under His rule, and enjoying His amazing blessings without limit.

That was God's promise to the nation of Israel. And so they had a very bright future. And yet, despite their bright future, they struggled with their inertia, their natural inertia.

If you look at the first few books of the Bible, and you trace their history, they always tended to struggle to go forward, and they always tended to want to turn around and go back.

A number of times in their journey to the promised land, they wanted to give up, and they complained to Moses. They wanted to go back to what they were used to, even though it was slavery in Egypt. And it was only really Moses' faith and leadership that kept them going.

And now, after 40 years, when we turn to the book of Joshua, after 40 years of wandering through the desert, they find themselves at the border of this promised land, on the banks of the river Jordan. But there's a problem, and you may have picked it up in verse 1.

[3 : 23] The problem is that Moses was dead. Their leader, their great leader, who had shepherded them all these years, was now gone.

And with him, I imagine much of their motivation to carry on going, because he was really the key to them carrying on going, and now he wasn't around anymore. In fact, a few of the tribes had said to

him before he died, well, you know, let's just park ourselves here on the east side of the river Jordan.

That's nice enough. You know, why do we have to go into the promised land and fight, and get into all this form of trouble? You know, this is, it's just less trouble to pitch our tents here, and to make a life for ourselves here, east of the Jordan.

You see, they were still struggling, as they always had, with their inertia, with their hesitancy to move forward. But what we need to understand about Israel this morning, is that their history in the Bible, serves as a mirror to reflect our own lives to us.

Very often, when we look at Israel, when we read about the nation of Israel, we see ourselves, we realize our own tendencies as human beings. And our tendency, like Israel's, is to get too comfortable, with our present situation, that we don't move forward in life, we don't become the people that God wants us to be.

[4 : 45] Because, today, we have an even greater promise, that God has made, to us, greater than Israel, ever had, in the Old Testament.

It's a promise that God has given us, through Jesus Christ, a promise, to forgive our sins, to remove the barrier between us, and enjoying fellowship with God, forever.

And so, to bring us, one day, into an amazing new world, the world that God has prepared, a world without sin, or death, or parting, or pain, a world without end, where we will enjoy God, and His blessings, forever, like we were meant to.

That is the promise, that God has given, in Jesus Christ, to all who trust in Him. And that is our promised land. And it's real, you know, heaven is not just, sitting in clouds, playing harps.

Heaven is, is a real world. Heaven is a physical world, like this one, but without any of the, the results of sin, without any of the effects of sin, ongoing forever.

[5 : 49] That is the promised land, that God, has promised to those, who trust in Christ. But what we learn, from the book of Joshua, is that like Israel, we need to overcome, our inertia, if we're going to enter, our promised land.

Well you know, we can't just sit around, and wait for heaven. That's, that's not possible. Just like the Israelites, couldn't just sit around, on the east bank of the Jordan, they needed to, get off their backsides, if you'll excuse the expression, and enter into, the life, that God was calling them into.

And so do we. Each of us, needs to be moving, in the direction, that God is calling us to, in our lives. And so how do we do that? How do we overcome, our natural inertia, and move forward, to be the people, that God is calling us to be?

Well, let's see what Israel needed, to overcome theirs. Because we do see, in this passage, first of all, they needed to be, strong and courageous. You see, as God addressed Joshua, Moses' replacement, who must now lead, these reluctant Israelites, into the promised land, there's one thing, that stands out, three times, I wonder if you spotted it, three times, God says to Joshua, be strong and courageous.

Did you see that? How often it was repeated? Verse six, be strong and courageous, because you will lead, these people to inherit, the land I swore, to their ancestors, to give them. Be strong and very courageous.

[7 : 13] And then again in verse nine, be strong and courageous. Now essentially, this is, this is fighting language. It's what a commanding officer, would tell his troops, just before, you know, storming the enemy trenches.

Be strong, be courageous. It's prodding, troops into action, and that's, that's what God is doing, here to Joshua. It's God's way of saying, that, you know, the land I promised you, is right there. You can see it, but you're going to have to fight for it. So get ready, because you're going to be tempted, to run the other way. It's not going to be easy. Get ready, be strong and courageous. You're going to face enemies. You're going to face troubles. Don't let that stop you. You know, after all, the land was full of Canaanites, and Anakites, and Perizzites, and Stalactites, and Stalagmites. No, no, just, just the other ones. And these were nasty people. If you looked, you know, the Anakites were huge. They were, they were people who would make like, Ibn Etzebeth look like a dwarf.

[8 : 15] These were tough, strong, armies of people, and they far outnumbered the Israelites. And most of the book of Joshua records the battles that Israel fought with them.

And we see, when we look at Joshua, we see that with God's help, against all odds, they won these battles against these ferocious enemies. But they only did that because they were willing to cross the Jordan and fight, and take up arms, and be strong and courageous.

You know, I said earlier that Israel's experience in the Bible mirrors our own experience. And just like the Israelites had enemies to fight in order to go where God was calling them to go, so do we.

We saw in the book of Ephesians earlier that Alan read for us. We have many enemies that can prevent us from entering eternal life. Paul writes, I'll say, I'll read it again.

You see, every day, the Bible warns us over and over again, every day we are confronted by real spiritual enemies that we can't see, but there are forces in this world and in our lives which confront us, and which tempt us, and deter us, and distract us from becoming the people God wants us to be every day.

[9 : 46] Unless you guard yourself, unless you stand, and unless you're looking for these enemies, they will take you out, and they will take you away from God, and they will distract you with all kinds of worries in life, and all kinds of distractions, that will cause you to focus on this life, and forget the life to come, forget the land to come.

And, you know, we need to be strong and courageous to fight these enemies. Every day, we need to put on a fighting attitude. The Bible says we need to put on the armor of God.

Do you do that? Because unless we do that, we won't move forward. Spiritually, we won't become the people that God wants us to be. And it takes strength.

It takes strength to do that. It takes strength to resist sin. Men, to resist pornography. Women, to resist gossip and slander.

It takes strength to resist the pull of drink, which I know many of you struggle with. It takes strength to remain sexually pure, in a world that is telling you to do the opposite.

[10 : 51] And we need to fight these lusts. We need to fight these temptations. It takes strength. It takes courage to believe in God's promises in the Bible.

It does. When everybody else might look at us and say, you believe that? You believe in some invisible God? Why do you believe that? It takes courage to take God at His word and put our hope and our energy and our money and our time into an eternity that we can't yet see.

It takes courage. It takes strength. But we're going to have to do those things if we're going to move forward to the life that God is calling us to live.

So that's the first thing. We need to be strong and courageous. The second thing we need in order to overcome our inertia is to absorb God's word.

Look at the next thing God tells Joshua to do if he's going to lead Israel into the promised land. He says, verse 7, Be strong and very courageous.

[11 : 53] Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left that you may be successful wherever you go.

Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Now, you would have expected as the Israelites were looking over the Jordan and into this land full of enemies, you would have expected God to say something like this to Joshua.

Okay, Joshua, you're about to enter into a seven-year-long campaign in Canaan against deadly enemies. So you need swords. You need horses. You need chariots. You need to organize an army.

Catapults. You definitely need catapults. Those city walls are high. But, you know, God doesn't say this. The only thing God tells Joshua that he really needs to fight this war is what?

[12 : 53] It's God's Word. God's Word. The Word of God. And he will be successful insofar as he's following that and he will fail insofar as he departs from it. That's all he needs.

Which kind of makes sense if God is really calling the shots. If God is sovereign in our world, if he decides what happens because he's God, then his will is always what will happen at the end of the day.

And Joshua will succeed in his campaign insofar as what he's doing lines up with God's will.

Because if God's will is what's going to happen, if Joshua lines up with God's will, then Joshua will be successful.

That's the point that God is trying to make. And that's why God's Word is vital to Joshua's success because he can only line up with what God wants if he opens God's Word and he reads it and he

understands God's will.

Well, you know, it's the same with us, isn't it? We will succeed in life insofar as we're chasing after God's will. Now, I'm not sure.

[13:57] People might succeed in a worldly sense without God. They might make lots of money. They might be successful in business. They might own a nice house. But that's not the type of success that God is talking about.

True success is entering into the life that God intends for us. True success is becoming the person you're meant to be, becoming the person that God made you to be.

That is true success. Not owning a house in Constantia or owning a business. No, true success is being the person that God intends for you to be.

And if we want to know what that person looks like, we look at Jesus. Jesus is the example of the perfect human. He's the example of what God intends for humans to be. But of course, none of us are that because we've fallen in sin away from that image of God.

But you see, that is true success. And if you want to aim for success, you should be aiming for Jesus. But the way you do that, the way you live a successful life, in God's definition, where you line up your life to God's will, is by absorbing His Word.

[15:13] Letting His Word mold your mind. Letting His Word mold your worldview. You know, everyone has a worldview. When we wake up in the morning and we think about life and our careers and our jobs and our money and the news, whatever it is, we have a worldview.

We have a way that we look at the world and we react to things. Well, you know what? The Bible changes our worldview to see the world in God's eyes. The Bible changes our lives to see our lives in God's eyes, which is vital if we're going to line up our lives to God's will.

You know, verse 8 says, this is what God says to Joshua. He says, Meditate on my Word day and night. You know, that word meditate is an interesting one.

It's not like we use the word today. It doesn't mean, you know, sitting cross-legged and burning incense and clearing your mind. In fact, it means the very opposite. It means filling your mind with God's Word.

In the original, the word, another kind of sense that that original word has in the text, means mutter, mutter, mutter God's Word. It's the same word, in fact, that was used by the Hebrews to describe the cooing of doves.

[16:27] You know doves? They, when they're walking around, they always seem like they're constantly muttering to themselves under their breath. You know, that's what a dove seems to be doing all the time.

Well, that's the sense of this phrase, meditate on God's Word. It means constantly talk God's Word to yourself. Constantly keep it on your lips. Remind yourself of the truths in God's Word in your daily life so that you can counter the views and the opinions that are being bombarded from TV and from magazines every day.

Because we're being bombarded with worldviews, with opinions. And we need to counter those by enforcing ourselves with God's Word, absorbing God's Word.

And the way you do that practically is by coming to church. That's a start. That's a vital start.

Hearing God's Word, sitting under God's Word like we're doing now. And joining a Bible study like Alan said earlier.

We're starting up Bible studies again this term. It's vital, vital. If you want to enforce yourself and absorb God's Word so that you can line your life up to His will, then you need to make a habit with other people of coming around God's Word.

[17:41] And Bible study is a great way to do that because you get to ask questions, you get to discuss things, you get to apply the Bible to your life. You know, don't come to me and say my life is falling apart and I don't know what to do.

If you're not going to a Bible study, if you're not reading your Bible, because that's all I'll tell you to do. You know, if you come to my office and you say, you know, nothing's going the way I want it to. Business is not working properly. My health is not good. I just don't know what to do. I'm going to ask you, are you reading your Bible every day? Are you gathering with God's people to read the Bible? Are you lining yourself up to God's will in your life?

Because unless you're doing that, then nothing else will fall into place. And make a habit of reading God's Word daily so that you can let it dwell in your mind.

You won't become the person that God is calling you to be unless you do that. Ah, but life is so busy and demanding, Pastor. I don't have time for church every week, maybe every second week, maybe every third week, but not every week.

[18 : 47] You know, it's quite demanding. I don't have time for a Bible study in the middle of the week. I'm too tired. I don't have time to read the Bible every day. It's just, you don't understand how busy I am, Pastor.

You only work on Sundays. You don't get it. Well, let me share with you something that I read over the holidays by a guy called J.C. Ryle. He says this, What greater insult to God can a man be guilty of than to refuse to read the letter God sends him from heaven?

You have no time to read it, but you make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, getting money, and spending money. You find it too troublesome to read? You had better say it once it is too much trouble to go to heaven.

See, it's vital to absorb God's word regularly if you're going to be the person that God calls you to be. And then the third way we overcome our inertia and head towards the life that God is calling us to is to know God's presence.

You see, verse 9, where God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous, look at what else he says. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

[20 : 07] And so here, God is giving, as soon as he tells Joshua to be strong and courageous, he's now giving Joshua the reason why he can be. No matter what he faces, and he will face great trials and enemies, he can be strong and courageous because God will be with him wherever he goes.

That's what God's promise to him is. And that knowledge is the source of his strength and courage, not something inside himself. You know, Joshua himself wasn't an amazing person. The book of Joshua is not actually about Joshua.

It's about God and how God uses Joshua, how God provides Joshua with strength and courage, which is necessary to lead the Israelites. It's not because Joshua is particularly strong or courageous himself, but it's because he can know God is with him, which makes all the difference. And it's vital, we understand this as well, because it's the same with us. Each time we face trials in life, and we will face trials in life, as we go forward in life, there will be trials, there will be difficulties, whether that's sickness or whether it's financial difficulty, you know, worries whether we'll have enough to live on when we retire.

those kind of worries and those kind of trials cause spiritual inertia. Those kind of worries distract us, they make it difficult for us to live the way God calls us to, and to do the things God calls us to do, and to be the people God calls us to be.

[21 : 39] And these worries are always distracting us. For example, worries about money will tend to cause Christians to prioritize getting enough money over what God wants them to be doing.

And so often, Christians, especially in today's world, where everything's tight and there's so many demands, Christians will find themselves prioritizing career over kingdom. And that's just an example of how our enemies use these material things and these worries over material things to distract us from what God wants us to be doing, pull us away from God's will.

Right there on the banks of the Jordan, you know, Joshua could have been distracted by worries, not having enough. He could have, he could have gone, oh, I don't know, we're not really in a good enough position to invade Canaan yet.

You know, we need to, we need to get a bigger army. We need horses. We don't have enough weapons. So let's just stop. Let's just regroup. Let's advance when we've got all our ducks in a row, you know.

But here, you see, God is essentially saying to Joshua, you don't need all that stuff to advance because you've got me, so just go and I'll sort it out. And brothers and sisters, let me tell you something, you don't need all your ducks in a row before you can step out and do the work that God is calling you to do.

[23 : 05] You don't need to have enough money to live on before you can give money to God's kingdom. You don't need to wait until work calms down before you have enough time for God's work because you know what?

Work will never calm down. All you need is to know that God will be with you. He's your provider. He's in charge of your bank account. It's His money anyway.

And He owns all the money in the world. He will give you what you need when you need it. And He will be there in the office to help you to do your job. So don't worry about it.

And He promises you, He promises you that the more you focus on Him and the more that you focus on His work and His kingdom in the midst of the busyness of life, the more He will sort all those other things out for you.

It's just an amazing promise. Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you as well. It's kind of backwards thinking. The less we concentrate on the worries and needs of life and the more we concentrate on God, the more God will actually sort out those worries and needs for us.

[24 : 09] That's what we've got to realize though. When you're not worrying about those things, then God will sort them out.

In fact, in the book of Hebrews, Hebrews mentions worrying over money. It quotes from Joshua chapter 1 verse 5.

It says this in Hebrews, Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. And so like Joshua, you too can be strong and courageous to step out into the life that God is calling you to live despite the worries of life, despite the pressures and the dangers because He promises to be right there with you when you do.

Do you trust that? Are you going to do that? Are you going to step out in faith? And the way He gives us access to that presence, in our lives, is through the awesome gift of prayer.

That is the way that we tap into and access God's presence. We read in Philippians, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[25 : 29] don't you want that peace that Philippians is talking about in this world of conflict and trouble? Don't you want that peace?

Well, you know where you can get it? You can get it in the presence of God. If only you would just turn around, stop focusing on all those silly distractions, turn around and focus on God.

Know His presence in your life and everything will become clear and you will experience that peace that you can't get anywhere else. And so God has made His presence with us available through prayer to guard us from becoming distracted.

And the more we pray, the more we know that presence because God is real. He is there. And the more we pray, which is this amazing gift that God has given us, the more that we can experience God's presence in our lives.

And the more, therefore, that we can live the lives that God has called us to in the strength that He provides rather than our own. And so that's the third way we overcome our inertia.

[26 : 33] We tap into the presence of God. We turn around. We stop getting distracted by the worries of life. And we pray. And then finally, we follow the leader.

We've been challenged in this passage to get off our backsides and to live the lives that God is calling us to live. I mean, that's what this passage is about. But the fact is we can't do that.

And I think we all know that. In the back of our mind, we're going, nah, I can't. See, because we know deep down inside we can't actually be the people God calls us to be. No matter how hard we try, we're going to fail.

Maybe you've tried for years and years and years and you just can't get it right and you just give up. And the reason is because of our sin. We have sin inside us.

That's what the Bible teaches us. We have a natural resistance to ignore God, to not live His ways. We always resist God naturally.

[27 : 31] We always want to call the shots ourselves. We want to go the other way from God's way. And that's why we need someone to lead us, don't we? Just like the Israelites needed.

Someone to go ahead of us and do what we can't do. That's why Israel needed Joshua. They wouldn't have done that without Joshua. Without him going in front and calling them to follow him, they would have never entered the promised land.

In fact, we see exactly what happened. After Joshua died, you can read through Joshua, go to the end. Then the next book in the Bible is the book of Judges. You know what Judges is? Judges, is what happened to Israel without a leader.

And they fell apart and they abandoned God. All sorts of horrible things happened because they had no leader. And so you see, we need a Joshua too, just like Israel did.

Well, you know what Joshua's name is in Hebrew? It's very interesting. It's Yeshua in Hebrew. You know what Jesus' name is in Hebrew? It's Yeshua. It's exactly the same name.

[28 : 36] And you know what? I don't think that was random. I don't think that's a mistake. Jesus is our Joshua. Jesus is the leader who went ahead of us and did what we couldn't do.

Because he was the only person who ever lived the way that God calls humans to live. And then he didn't only come to live the life that we should have lived.

He came to die the death that we should have died and paid for our sins. Paid for the sins of all who trust in him. He came to take our place to do what we couldn't do.

The sins that up until now have been separating us from the life that God intends for us. Jesus took those on himself to clear the way and the curtain was open and access to God and access to life was made available to each one of us.

And now Jesus, our Joshua, calls us to trust him and to follow him into that life. Have you done that?

[29 : 42] Is he your leader? Are you listening for his voice? And are you obeying his commands every day? Or are you still living life apart from him?

Are you still living your life with you calling the shots? Have you not yet come under his authority? Because he has all authority in heaven and on earth.

He said after he rose again that proved to us he is God's king. He is the representative of God from heaven to us. He has all authority. He has authority over our lives whether we know it or not.

Have you come under that authority yet? Because you see you need a leader whether you know it or not. And Jesus is the only one who can lead you into the eternal life that God promises you.

Will you follow him? Well in closing I challenge you will you today take steps to overcome your inertia or you're just going to stay like my highlighter on the ground there unmoving.

[30 : 46] Will you take steps to overcome your inertia today? Whether that's perhaps coming to Jesus for the first time closing the door when you get home and saying Jesus okay I get it I'm sorry I've been ignoring you Lord but I know that that you opened the way to God for me you opened the way to life.

Forgive me help me help me to follow you today. Help me to listen to you today. Or maybe you've done that start taking God's word more seriously in your life.

You need to put in a schedule of daily Bible readings in your life. You need to get some good material that will help you to read the Bible and understand it. You need to join a Bible study if you're not part of one.

You need to stop coming to church once a month or once every two months and come to church every Sunday. Because that's more important than anything else. Sitting under God's word. Or maybe you need to start praying more.

Maybe your prayer life is just really suffering. And so you need to find someone else in this church and say can we meet on a regular basis and pray together to hold each other accountable?

[32 : 01] In other words, will you get off your backside today? And will you do what you need to do to move forward? And will you be willing to follow Jesus into battle and into eternal life today?

Let's pray. Yes, Lord Jesus, as we sung in the creed song earlier, we believe that you rose again. And we believe that you are coming back.

And Lord, we thank you for that great promise that you gave to your first disciples. That you told them all authority has been given and as they go out and do your work, you will be with them to the very end of the age.

Lord, thank you for that promise. Thank you that we can know your presence. Lord, we pray as we've been challenged by your commands to Joshua this morning, we pray that you would help us to step into the lives that you've called us to live, to take the risks that you've called us to take, to be willing to follow our leader, Jesus.

Help us, Lord, to overcome our inertia. Help us to overcome our tendency just to stay where we are. And, Lord, lead us through him to life everlasting in Jesus' name.

[33 : 24] Amen.