

LIVE STRONG. FACING LIFE WITH FAITH

Notes/Week 7/ Joshua 23-24

Looking Back, Moving Forward

Introduction and review

God has called us to a life of faith, but it is not a passive life. We must take possession of all we have and all we are in Christ. Likewise, Israel was called to a life of faith. Like us, they had to realize all that God had done for them because He loved them and then choose their response. *Remember. Israel had an external covenant with God (The Law, circumcision) and they inherited a land. We, as believers in Christ, have an internal and eternal covenant with God through Christ and we inherit a life in Christ.*

Review your notes for all 7 weeks through New Covenant eyes. Apply the principles of faith which we learned in Joshua to your own Christian life.

This week, Joshua will give two speeches. One in chapter 23 and another in chapter 24. He is challenging Israel to live a life of faith. Both chapters basically boil down to two things: 1) This is what God has done, simply because He loves you (grace) 2). How will you respond to God's grace? The question is the same for us.

I. Joshua's Charge to Israel (Joshua 23)

Final words are weighty. Joshua is about to die. His time is short therefore his final words are important. Joshua is issuing a very strong admonition and warning to Israel.

A. Admonition

- 1. Cooperate with God (verses 3-5).** God has been fighting on Israel's behalf. No victory has come in their own strength. God has given, God has fought, and God has dispossessed the enemy from the land. BUT, verse 5 is clear; Israel must take possession of it. This endeavor is not passive. They cannot sit on the sidelines. They must obey God and cooperate with His plan. They must trust Him enough to obey Him. Faith.
- 2. Obey (verses 6-7).** The phrase "Be very firm" means to *persevere against*. This is not a momentary victory. This is a lifetime endeavor of obedience, always alert to the enemy. They were to "Keep" and "Do" all the Law of Moses. This is not rule keeping! It was careful observance to live as God has instructed them to live, giving careful attention to the obligations of the covenant. Remember! Obedience brings freedom. Disobedience brings bondage. The Law was not to hem them in, it was to set them free and keep them safe from the ravages of idolatry.
- 3. Cling (verse 8).** Cling means to hold fast, stay close, adhere in such a way that to separate will do damage, be joined. The word *cling* in verse 8 is the same word God used in genesis 2:24 when he tells a man to leave his father and mother and *CLEAVE* to his wife. Israel is follow closely, be joined to, adhere to God is such a way that if they ever separate themselves from God it will cause great damage. And why do they cling to the Lord? Verse 9 and 10 remind them that God has been faithful to them . He has kept every promise.
- 4. Love (Verse 11).** "Take diligent heed" is a weighty phrase. This is no lighthearted statement. To love the Lord your God is decisive and all consuming. The Hebrew language does not have a lot of different words for "love" like the Greek of the New Testament. The context determines the translation of the

Hebrew word for *love*. In Joshua 23, *love is an ardent and vehement inclination of the mind and a tenderness of affection at the same time. Love for God always expresses itself in worship/ service.*

A. Warning (Joshua 23:12-16)

Verse 12 uses the word “*cling*” again. The Warning is to not go back and cling to the nations that God has/is driving out of Canaan. Remember the definition of cling is to adhere, follow closely. The warning is that God will not continue to drive them out if Israel chooses to cling to them. When the book of Joshua ends, God is still in the process of driving out the enemy. He will continue to fight for them but only if Israel clings to Him.

Verse 14 and 15 are words to remember! Every **good promise** God has given, He has kept. He is a faithful God. But don't forget the promises that are negative. God will keep **every negative/consequential promise** that He has made if Israel is disobedient. His faithfulness does not only apply to good things. If he says there will be consequences, then rest assured, there will be consequences for disobedience.

Verse 16. If Israel transgresses-steps over the line of God's Law by worshipping false gods, idols- they will quickly perish off of the good land God has given. This is a promise of God. Remember. Idols always appeal to the flesh. For us, an idol can be anything we put in the place of Christ, trying to get from it what we can only get from Christ. **James 1:14-15** gives us a sequence of events that parallels what God is telling Israel. Desire leads to disobedience which leads to death. Death for Israel would be external-they would perish from the good land. Our death is internal-we perish spiritually from the blessings of this good life in Christ. We don't lose our salvation, but we lose the joy of fellowship with Christ and the blessings of that fellowship. THEREFORE go back to the ADMONITION!

The application of Joshua's admonition and warning to our own lives should not be terrible hard for us to do.

II. Grace for Israel (Joshua 24)

Joshua gathers the people again. This time he gathers them to Shechem. Shechem is a holy place between two mountains. It is the place where God told Abraham his descendants would inherit the land. (Genesis 12:6-7). Shechem is also the place where Jacob built an altar (Genesis 33:18-20). And Shechem is also the place where Israel renews their commitment to the Lord after the victory over Ai (Joshua 8:30-35). It is a holy place.

A. What God has done.

Joshua uses the phrase “*Thus says the Lord*” in verse 2. Therefore these verses (2-12) are the words of God, as spoken by God to Joshua. Notice that God is speaking in first person. He uses the pronoun “I” throughout the passage.

In class we read the passage and marked every phrase in which “I” (God) is linked to a noun. Take the time to do this if you did not do it in class. Then read every phrase you marked. It will take your breath away!

The passage is a strong reminder that God is the subject. He is at the center of everything. He has done everything for Israel and He has done it because of His love for them. Dear one that is GRACE! Giving us what we do not deserve because He loves us. Read with grace-filled eyes!

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 should be read along with Joshua 24. Just do it. I can't so that for you in the notes. It's just grace!! Do you see it? Grace is in the Old Testament as well as the new. While Israel had an external covenant with God, it was still a covenant filled with grace. Anytime sinful humans have a relationship with holy God it is based on God's grace. Now how will Israel respond?

B. Israel's response.

Verse 14 says, "Now, therefore" so based on the previous information (passages) Israel must respond. The word "serve" is used 17 times in verse 17-31. Anytime a word is repeated in Scripture, we must pay attention. The Hebrew word *to serve* includes more than a physical act. It includes the *attitude of reverence expressed through a life of worship*. Service/worship is not an event. It is a life. Joshua presses them hard to choose how they will respond to God. Verse 15 is often quoted. '*Choose you this day whom you will serve*'. There could be no vacillating. No hanging out between two opinions or two lifestyles. (See 1 Kings 18:21). Joshua had already made his choice. "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

Three times Israel says they choose to serve the Lord (Verse 18, 21, and 24). Every time, Joshua presses them harder, warning them of the consequences of turning back and clinging to the nations and their false gods (verse 19, 20, and 22). Each time Israel reiterates their choice to serve/worship God. In verse 26, Joshua memorializes their decision. It is the ninth and last memorial of Joshua. The call to remember is evident throughout the book. Verse 31 is a high note. They served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the leaders who knew Joshua.

The choice seems so simple. This is what God has done (by grace), and this is the response...faith (trusting God enough to obey Him). The choice is the same for us.

III. Grace for Us.

Joshua 24:1-13 the subject is God. We marked every reference to God and what he did for Israel. Now look at Ephesians 1:1-14 and we will do the same thing, but this time Christ is the subject. In the New Covenant **everything God has done for us, He has done through Christ**. Examine Ephesians 1-3 to see all that we have in Christ. In class we marked the verses. You do the same. Here is list you can use.

Ephesians 1:1-14

- a. Chosen— by grace, declared holy and blameless, nothing can disqualify us from our relationship with God through Christ.
- b. Predestined—by grace, not a destination but to a purpose
- c. Adoption—by grace, we are given the status of adoption, never to be disowned , with full use of all God has made available to us in Christ.
- d. Grace—freely bestowed, we didn't earn it.

- e. Redemption—by grace, through the blood of Christ we are bought and made new.
- f. Forgiven—by grace, forgiven in proportion to His grace (lavished on us).
- g. We are part of the unfolding plan of God (the church)—by grace.
- h. Sealed with the Holy Spirit—by grace, a finished transaction that cannot be undone, marking ownership by Christ, and a pledge of our inheritance both now and in eternity.

Ephesians 2 continues. We are saved by grace through faith. We are the workmanship of God. We are not just saved for Heaven, but we are saved for good works here on earth that God has already proposed for us. We were far off from God, but by grace, He has brought us near. We were without hope, but in Christ we have hope. By grace, we have access to the Father through Christ. We are no longer strangers to God, but because of Christ, we are members of God's household. (Seriously, could you just shout right now?) By grace, we are part of this wonderful, mysterious, beautiful thing called the church.

Ephesians 3. We have the great privilege, as the church, to make known the wisdom of God. By grace, we are God's greatest witnesses. AND we live the Christian life through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ. By grace, Christ in us!

NOW THEREFORE, HOW WILL WE RESPOND?

Choose you this day whom you will serve. If Christ is Lord, follow Him. If the world and the pleasures of the world and the selfishness of self is lord, follow it. Don't vacillate between two opinions. Don't live like an unstable, double-minded person (1 Kings 18:21, James 1:8).

Ephesians 4:1 is the response. *"Walk (live) in a manner worthy of the call..."* The call to salvation. Live worthy of this high and holy call. How? By faith! Trust God enough to obey Him. Cooperate with Him. Obey Him. Cling to Him. Love Him. Your life is a living sacrifice, a living act of worship expressed in service and obedience.

How can we live such a life of faith? Listen! You can't. He never said you could. But He can, and said He always would. By grace, He equips us to live as He has commanded us to live. He has given us the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. A life of faith cannot be lived apart from those two things.

Warning!

Go back to Joshua 24. Now, turn the page to Judges. Judges 2:10-11 are tragic. The high note of Joshua 24 only takes one generation to disappear. The next chapter in the life of Israel is characterized by this ominous phrase, *"And everyone did what was right in their own eyes."*

The warning is for us too. This old world will always appeal to our sinful flesh, just like the idols of Canaan appealed to Israel. We must be alert, walking wisely, always aware of the enemy who wants to devour us. The consequences of disobedience are dire. Faith, however, is the key. Trusting God enough to obey Him, and empowered to do it by the Holy Spirit who lives within us (Philippians 2:13). ***Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.***

