

Joshua Chapter 23: v. 1-16. – Joshua’s Farewell Speech.

(Read Joshua 23: v. 1-16)

Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age. <sup>2</sup> And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: “I am old, advanced in age.

<sup>3</sup> You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God *is* He who has fought for you.

<sup>4</sup> See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward.

<sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,

<sup>7</sup> *and* lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause *anyone* to swear *by them*; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them,

<sup>8</sup> but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. <sup>9</sup> For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but *as for* you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day.

<sup>10</sup> One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God *is* He who fights for you, as He promised you. <sup>11</sup> Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God.

<sup>12</sup> Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you,

<sup>13</sup> know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

<sup>14</sup> “Behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.

<sup>15</sup> Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

<sup>16</sup> When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.”

Introduction.

We are now coming to the end of the book of Joshua. We are also coming to the end of the life of Joshua on this earth. Farewell speeches are always very challenging, but when you are very old and about to die then a farewell speech takes on a whole new meaning. Joshua died when he was 110 years old. (Joshua 24: v. 29) Therefore this speech was probably his last public appearance to the Elders and leaders of the land of Israel.

Joshua was born in Egypt when God's people were slaves in that land. As a young soldier he became Moses's assistant and was one of the first people to spy out the land of Canaan which God had promised as an inheritance for His people. He was also one of only two people, over 20 yrs. to survive the 40 years in the wilderness. Caleb was the other soldier. This survival was due to their faithfulness in trusting God's word concerning His ability to help them drive out the nations of Canaan.

Joshua was rewarded with a long life and a fruitful ministry because he trusted in God's ability to fulfill the promises that He makes to His people. There was nothing special about Joshua but there was something special about the God he trusted.

### Application

Sometimes the only way that we will prove God's faithfulness to His word is to take big steps of faith and to really trust Him. Sometimes that can be through trusting God for His provision financially. Sometimes it can be trusting God for His ability to serve Him in a particular ministry. Sometimes it is just being obedient to the Bible which we know will upset our friends at work or our family.

Whatever that step of faith might be I can assure you that if you take it in a genuine and sincere way that is approved through God's word, then you are assured of God's blessing.

Joshua took lots of steps of faith to honor God and now at the end of his life he wanted to encourage the nation to follow whole heartedly the God who honored his steps of "Faith".

There are several things that I would like to draw out from this passage.

#### 1. Joshua's Thankfulness to God – v. 3, 9, 14.

Joshua reminded all the leaders of Israel of what God had done during his life time.

Twice in v. 3 Joshua connects his thankfulness to God with the leaders. He says in the N.K. J. version "You have seen all that the Lord YOUR God has done.....for the Lord YOUR God is He who has fought for you."

In Joshua's "Thankfulness to God" he was encouraging the leaders to join in HIS "Thankfulness".

The Bible describes "Thankfulness" as a heartfelt gratitude to God, expressed in response to His love and mercy.

Joshua recognized that it was God who had fought with and for His people to conquer the land and exercise God's judgement for sin. Joshua was "Thankful" for God's help and He wanted the leaders of Israel not to forget what God had done in providing them a land to live in.

In v. 14 Joshua reminded the leaders that God had fulfilled ALL of His promises in the lives of His chosen people.

People who make promises to us, may fail in carrying them out, because they are human. However God is the only person who can fulfill ALL of the promises that He makes because He has the power to fulfill ALL that He promises to do.

Christians ought to be always a "Thankful People".

The Bible says that as Christians we should be "Thankful" for the following.

- a) Thankful for Jesus Christ – In 2 Cor. 8: v. 15 Paul says “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift”. He was referring to Jesus Christ. “
- b) Thankful for answered prayer - In 1 Samuel 2: v. 1-10 we read Hannah’s thankful prayer as she pours out her heart in “Thankfulness” to God for answering her prayer and giving her a son.
- c) Thankful for other people - Paul was “Thankful” for Philemon’s faith and love towards Jesus and all the believers. ( Philemon v. 4-5 )
- d) Thankful for God’s provision - Even Jesus in Matthew chapter 14: v. 19 was thankful for God’s provision in feeding the 5,000 people with their Jewish Bento boxes.( lunch boxes)

We must never forget the source of our blessings and be “Thankful” to God, always for them.

Joshua was not only thankful for what God had done in the past, he was also thankful of what God will do in the future. The reason for that is that God’s promises are eternal for ALL generations of His people.

If you are one of God’s people today, then God’s promises are for you too.

## 2. Joshua’s Challenge – v. 6-8 and v. 11-13.

The second thing that I want you to notice in this passage is Joshua’s challenge. These challenges are contained in v. 6-8 and 11-13.

Joshua gives the leaders 4 challenges. These are, obedience, separation, loyalty and love.

We will deal with these challenges separately.

- a) Obedience - Let us turn back and read Joshua chapter 1: v. 6, 7, and 8.

<sup>6</sup> Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

<sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

<sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe 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.

This is the word of God to Joshua. Now let us turn and read Joshua chapter 23: v. 6, 7, and 8.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,

<sup>7</sup> *and* lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause *anyone* to swear *by them*; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them,

<sup>8</sup> but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

You don’t need to be a literary giant to notice that these words are very similar.

Joshua was calling the leaders to be obedient to exactly the same thing that God had called him to obey many years ago when he set out to conquer the land.

The thing that helped Joshua through all of his battles up to that day was his obedience to God's word at the very start of the campaign.

Joshua's obedience was complete and wholehearted.

Half-hearted and partial obedience is not acceptable to God. He wants us to obey 100%.

We are always on safe ground to challenge people to obey the things in the Bible. However we need to be sure, like Joshua was, that we have obeyed those things also.

- b) Separation - Joshua challenged the leaders NOT to mix with any of the surrounding nations. (v. 7) Joshua told them not to even mention the name of their gods. They were also told not to take part in any of their worship, or to serve them in any way.

Joshua was concerned that the distinctiveness of God's people would be lost and the purity of God's people would be affected if they started to mix in any way with the pagan nations.

The doctrine of separation is very clear in the Bible and it is based on one of God's essential attributes that is His Holiness. God never looks upon sin with a tolerant eye or a compromising attitude. God's Holiness extends to His will concerning the conduct of His children. As believers we are called into a fellowship with God who is "light", and in Him is no darkness at all.

It is worth quoting 1 John Chapter 1 v. 5-10 here. (NKJ)

<sup>5</sup> This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

These verses in 1 John make it clear that it is absolutely necessary to separate from whatever is darkness. Darkness is anything that is in direct opposition to the very nature of a Holy God.

Peter makes it clear in 1 Peter 1: v. 15, 16. (N.K.J.)

<sup>15</sup> but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, <sup>16</sup> because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

In Ephesians Chapter 5: v. 11 we are told to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."

It is very difficult to honor Jesus 100% if you are the only Christian in the family or the only Christian in your work place.

However if you honor God and do not take part in any Buddhist or Shinto ceremony, then God will certainly honor you.

1 Samuel 2: v. 30b says "...for those who honor me I will honor..."

One commentator says on this subject – "Our Strength lies not in mixing with the world but in separating from it. True, we must have friends and contacts who are not Christians, but to dabble in the world's godless affairs will damage our spiritual lives."

(Rev. Dr. Colin Peckham – page 223 of “Joshua a devotional commentary”)

Joshua also told the leaders that the Israelites must not MARRY any of the peoples from the other nations. If they did inter-marry with these people then God’s hand of protection would not be upon them.

Marriage is a very important relationship and Joshua warned the leaders that if anybody married outside of the Jewish faith, then they would lose God’s protection and create big problems for themselves.

If you are a Christian and you are looking for a husband or a wife then your first consideration must be your spiritual compatibility. The question you need to ask is

“Do they share the same faith as you and are they on the same spiritual level as you.

- c) Loyalty - In v. 8 Joshua tells the leaders to “Hold Fast” to the Lord their God. In Hebrew this is the same word that we encountered in the previous chapter. The word means to “Cling tightly to”. I gave the illustration from Cling Film/ Food wrap last week. We must be so loyal to God that nothing must separate us. Nothing must come between our God and US.

Joshua knew that the leaders would be tempted to compromise in their commitment to the one true God, therefore they had to stick to God closely through all their circumstances.

Loyalty to God is an aspect of our faith that we must hang on to in all circumstances.

- d) Love - In v. 11 Joshua challenges the leaders to really love God. Love is a very powerful thing, but it cannot be easily explained. God’s love towards us is also a very powerful thing that cannot be easily explained also.

However when the New Testament was translated into Greek, the translators had a very difficult time to translated God’s Love. There was no word in the very rich Greek language that aptly described God’s love. They came up with the word “Agape” this word means “Sacrificial Love”

In other words, God love is a love that is prepared to make sacrifices.

We know from the Bible that God made a big sacrifice for human beings, by sending His own Son Jesus Christ into this world.

Then the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, willingly allowed Himself to be a sacrifice for us, taking the punishment for ALL of our sins.

2 Corinthians 5: v. 21.

<sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Therefore if we love God, with God’s love in our heart, then we must be prepared to make “Sacrifices for Him”

The question that I must ask you all this morning is “are you prepared to make sacrifices in your life for God?” Q. Am I prepared to make them too?

God knows my life and He knows yours too.

However from my experience if God is calling you to go forward on a “faith” project with Him, I can tell you that it will involve sacrifices.

However what I can tell you is that from my experience it’s worth it. It’s worth making sacrifices for God, it proves your love for Him. God is no man’s debtor, whatever we sow, that we will reap.

Galatians Chapter 6: v. 7 says “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”

So Joshua challenges the leaders of Israel just before his death with 4 main things.

They must be obedient to His word, they must live separated lives, they must love God with a sacrificial love and they must be loyal to God.

I hope that these things are a top priority in our Christian lives.

### 3. Joshua’s Warning – v. 12-13, 15-16.

In v. 12-13 and 15-16 Joshua gives the leaders a solemn warning.

I would like to read v. 12-13 and v. 15-16 in the N.L.T.

<sup>12</sup> “But if you turn away from him and cling to the customs of the survivors of these nations remaining among you, and if you intermarry with them,

<sup>13</sup> then know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive them out of your land. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs and thorny brambles in your eyes, and you will vanish from this good land the LORD your God has given you.

<sup>15</sup> But as surely as the LORD your God has given you the good things he promised, he will also bring disaster on you if you disobey him. He will completely destroy you from this good land he has given you.

<sup>16</sup> If you break the covenant of the LORD your God by worshiping and serving other gods, his anger will burn against you, and you will quickly vanish from the good land he has given you.”

These verses make very challenging reading.

God warns His own chosen people that He will punish them if they turn away from Him and embrace the practices of the surrounding nations.

God is a God of LOVE, but He also is a God of JUSTICE. Therefore He must punish SIN.

Biblical history informs us that they did eventually disobey God and followed the gods of the other nations. They were severely punished for this and the nation was taken into captivity in Babylon.

So God is a God who makes promises for our good, but also warnings about judgement to come if we disobey his words.

Therefore it is important that we take God’s judgement upon our lives seriously.

I thought it might be good if we learn some doctrine on the subject of “Judgement” as it is an important subject and affects all of us here today.

The fact of “Judgement” is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testament.

Psalm 96: v. 13 in N.K.J.

<sup>13</sup> For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.

Acts 17: v. 31 in N.K.J.

<sup>31</sup> because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Hebrews 9: v. 27 (N.K.J.)

<sup>27</sup> And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

The Bible is clear that all judgement is committed to Jesus Christ

( John 5: v. 22)

<sup>22</sup> For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

The Judgements mentioned in the Bible differ as to the time, place, subjects and results.

1. There is a Judgement that is already past – this is the judgement at the cross.

John 5: v. 24

<sup>24</sup> “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

John 12: v. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

2. There is a present judgement which is taking place daily in the life of the believer.

1 Cor.11: v. 31-32

<sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

1 John 1: v. 5-7

<sup>5</sup> This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

3. There are Future Judgements.

a) Judgement of Christians –

2 Cor. 5: v.10.

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

This is not a judgement concerning the Salvation of believers. This is a judgement concerning our works as 1 Cor. 3: v. 8-16 points out.

b) Judgement of the Living nations. –

Matthew 25: v. 31-33.

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matthew 25:41

<sup>41</sup> “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

c) Judgement of the Great White Throne –

Revelation 20:v.11-15.

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

<sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

So to sum up all these judgements, firstly we can say that we need to make sure that our sin has already been judged and taken care of by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross.

Q. Have you asked Jesus to forgive your sin?

Secondly we need to continually judge ourselves daily, and confess any sin in our life to Jesus. (1 John 1: v.9)

Thirdly we need to examine the work that we are doing for Jesus. Is it a work that will be burned with fire or is it a work that will be rewarded?

God has different ministries for us to be involved in at different times of our lives. Make sure that you are in the center of the circle of the will of God, doing what He wants you to do for this moment of time.

Let us Pray !!!