

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty-Three – Joshua 23:1-16

John White in his book *Excellence in Leadership* talks about some of the trauma that Nehemiah went through in trying to build a wall. Some of the things he said really applied to Joshua. Let's open with this:

(Excellence in Leadership by John White)

Few Christians have encountered fiercer or more sustained opposition than the eighteenth-century evangelist George Whitefield. Whitefield, rather than John Wesley or any other eighteenth-century leader, was the central figure in the great evangelical awakening in Britain and North America. As a young Anglican clergyman, he often preached to crowds of over fifty thousand people in the open air—without microphones and loudspeakers.

Benjamin Franklin (who eventually became his American publisher), doubting that the feat was possible, attended a meeting to assess the matter as accurately as he could. He concluded that it was indeed possible due to Whitefield's extraordinary vocal powers, his clear enunciation and the total silence that often prevailed while he preached. His hearers were not only spellbound but often brought under such conviction of sin that whole multitudes would weep. And

it was by Whitefield that an initially fearful John Wesley was introduced to open-air preaching.

Opposition came early, principally from godless ministers of the gospel. Most Anglican churches were eventually closed to him. Three principles seemed to guide him in dealing with it: [number one] never to reply to his critics, [number two] wherever possible to avoid engaging in controversy and [number three] *never to stop proclaiming the whole truth of the gospel*.

When churches closed their doors to him he preached to much larger crowds out-of-doors. He would courteously request permission to use the local church wherever he was, preaching in the church if permission was given, but rejoicing in the greater opportunity when it was not.

He had an ultimate goal: to proclaim the gospel fully and fearlessly. That goal was to Whitefield what building the wall was to Nehemiah. The slander and abuse to which he was subjected never made him lose sight of it.

He never stopped “building his wall.” He preached his last sermon as a dying man from the landing of a Presbyterian manse in Massachusetts. The power of the Holy Spirit gripped his listeners while the candle in his candleholder slowly burned and went out in its socket. He died the following day, his own life burned out in completing the task God had given him.

pp. 73-74

We’re there. Joshua is burning out. These are his last messages that are recorded in chapters 23 and 24.

In following our outline of the book of Joshua, the first five chapters they **INVADED THE LAND**.

In chapters 6-12 they **SUBJECT THE LAND**—seven years of military campaign.

Thirteen to twenty-two is the **DIVISION OF THE LAND** into all the sections.

But now we come to number four in the outline:

IV. The CONCLUSION—chapters 23 and 24.

In these two chapters Joshua gives a message in each one of them.

In chapter 23 his focus is on **SEPARATION**.

In chapter 24 his focus is going to be on **SERVICE**.

Now when we talk about **SEPARATION**, don't misunderstand. There are a lot of people that get the idea that separation means that we don't associate with people who are not believers. We are separate from them and we spend all our time with Christians.

That's the furthest thing from the truth on separation in the Bible. Separation in the Bible communicates the thought of indulging in practices, going along with programs and doing the things that they do.

Someone said:

“God expects us to love the sinner and to hate the sin.”
(source unknown)

Jesus Christ was accused of spending all of His time with sinners and people who needed Him. We find Him as the spotless, sinless, Son of God.

There are two verses in 2 Corinthians 6 that can help set the stage for our verses:

2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me, Says the Lord Almighty.”

Joshua's had a long hard run in the will of God. And uppermost in his mind, as this study opens, is the fact that he's gotten older and he isn't going to be here very long.

With the aged apostle John he would say, if he could express his feelings to us: “Soon we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.” (see 1 John 3:2)

And if that great old hymn had been written which expresses so much of the thought of a person who's getting close to the

time when he's going to go be with the Lord, Joshua would be singing it.

“My Wonderful Lord”

I have found a deep peace that I never had known
And a joy this world could not afford
Since I yielded control of my body and soul
To my wonderful, wonderful Lord.

I desire that my life shall be ordered by Thee,
That my will be in perfect accord
With Thine own sov'reign will, Thy desires to fulfill,
My wonderful, wonderful Lord.

All the talents I have, I have laid at [Your] feet;
[Your] approval shall be my reward.
Be my store great or small, I surrender it all
To my wonderful, wonderful Lord.

Thou are fairer to me than the fairest of earth,
Thou omnipotent, life-giving Word.
O Thou Ancient of Days, Thou art worthy all praise,
My wonderful, wonderful Lord.
(source unknown)

As Joshua steps before us on this occasion it's very similar to the experience that his master Moses had. We read:

Exodus 34:29, 30

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord...

Joshua comes before us glowing with the presence of God. We see him like his Master as he comes.

And we can have that same radiance on our face too.

Second Corinthians 3:18 says we have no veil over our faces:

2 Corinthians 3:18

...we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Get a picture of a four-star general, great military man, distinguished, walking with dignity, actually glowing with the presence of God upon his face. He comes to make a speech.

This speech is probably given at Shiloh—the place for the tent of meeting where they've had all the allotments. It's just down the road about 10 or 11 miles from here where Timnath-Serah is, the location of Joshua's inheritance. So it's not a long trip.

It would be good for us to outline his speech before we get into the details of it. Okay?

We have four points:

I. The WAITING GOD—verses 1-5

Now if we wanted to break that down just a little bit further we could say:

A. The PRELIMINARIES are in verses 1 and 2,

B. The PAST is in verses 3 and 4, and

C. The PRESENT is in verse 5.

Then we're going to talk about:

II. The WAY TO WIN—verses 6-11

III. The WARNING—verses 12 and 13

IV. The WRAP-UP—verses 14-16

Isn't this fun? We only have 16 verses so we can really milk them for some truth. Get excited about what's in the text for us.

The one thing that's going to stand out in our study, which is very, very interesting, is that in these 16 verses we don't have any trouble telling where Joshua's heart is.

Matthew 6:21 says:

Matthew 6:21

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Colossians 3:11b

Christ is all and in all.

Paul says:

Philippians 3:7

I counted everything but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,

How many times does the little phrase “the Lord your God” occur in this speech, in 16 verses? It occurs twelve times.

How many times does the word “Lord” occur, including those? Sixteen times.

Then if we want to add on top of that not only the word “Lord,” but “he” and “himself”—which are pronouns referring to Him—we end up with 24 references to the Lord in this little speech.

Does this guy really love the Lord? Does he really want to glorify Him?

Where his treasure is, his heart's going to be also. As he comes to talk, the focus of everything is upon the Lord himself.

So let's dig in. We're talking about the subject of SEPARATION and we're going to look first at:

I. The WAITING GOD in the first five verses.

v. 1 After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years,

“After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years,”

See that little phrase “After a long time”?

Well, the children of Israel now have been in the land for quite a while. They've kind of settled down here. They're enjoying the good land. But they haven't been motivated to do what they needed to do.

When the inheritances were given, those inheritances went to the boundaries of some people who still lived in the land that were foreigners. And it was Joshua's mandate to them that when they went in, they were to go in and possess their inheritances and drive the enemy out and take the land.

Instead of doing this, they'd gone in and kind of settled down and enjoyed a little bit of the good life. They have not followed through on what they would say they would do. And so, this crusty old soldier stands up. He's "old and well advanced in years" and he starts speaking to them about the fact that there is a waiting God.

There is a waiting God who is waiting to do what He's done in the past, but to do it now in the present. And He's waiting for them to be obedient to what He's had to say.

v. 2 summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am old and well advanced in years.

“[He] summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am old and well advanced in years.”

Well, it's been about 15 or 20 years since the last time that we visited with these folks. After the allotment committee met and those final things were taken care of, then all of this has transpired—20 years.

Now we can tell that can't we in that second verse? See they've already set up their local governments. They've got "elders," they've got "leaders," they've got "judges," they've got "officials" and so they've been living the good life—enjoying the land.

But they're also letting these other people live in that land. And so, this is a real summit meeting on separation and he is calling everybody together to spill his insides about how he feels about what they're doing.

Now who is in the audience? Well, we know Phinehas the high priest has got to be there. Old Caleb is still here in the audience. And probably all of the soldiers who fought in the battle 20 years ago—many of them are here. They've returned to hear their great leader give this speech.

And the old veteran is going to focus primarily on God's unfailing faithfulness in giving them the land and their responsibility in turn to be faithful, to drive out the enemy like the Lord had said for them to do.

Now we get the feeling when we see that little phrase "I am old and well advanced in years" that Joshua knows the curtain's coming down. He knows he's played well. There are three major acts of the play and we're in the final act. And these are the final acts of a faithful man as he is speaking here.

And the whole focus of these first five verses is on a waiting God. Now the preliminaries are gone—verses 1 and 2—we have them behind us. And now that they're out of the way, we come to:

B. The PAST in verses 3 and 4.

v. 3 You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you.

“You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you.”

Well, we can tell at heart he’s a military man can’t we? He gets started with the military and he says, “I’m talking to an audience that’s seen this. You have witnessed what God did for you. You’ve not only seen it, but you’ve been a part of it and God has fought for you and given you this land.”

v. 4 Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west.

“Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain” [there’s a phrase] “—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west.”

Verse 3 focuses on the LORD and verse 4 focuses on JOSHUA.

In verse 3 the LORD FOUGHT, in verse 4 JOSHUA PROVIDED THE ALLOTMENTS but there were still people there that needed to be driven out by the individual tribes.

Whereas in verse 3 we're talking about the **SUBJECTION OF THE LAND**, in verse 4 we're talking about the **DIVISION OF THE LAND**.

In verse 3 its **MILITARY** and in verse 4 its **OCCUPATION** of that which was militarily been taken.

In verse 3 it's something they've **SEEN**, in verse 4 it's something they need to **REMEMBER**.

And so, he's very graciously telling them that their inheritance is larger than what they are presently occupying.

Have we been faithful to possess all the Lord's giving us?

There's still a whole lot of territory. The Lord says, "I would really like for you to possess this and to enjoy it and experience the blessing of this, but you haven't done it yet. You're content to sit right where you are."

We have to face that every time a challenge comes before us in this regard.

Now verse 5 is kind of a key verse to his speech. And after this verse we transition into the next part of his speech.

v. 5 The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you.

“The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you.”

Now this is something we haven't done yet. This is a part of the task that's unfinished. And if we put the focus on the right words we'll come up with this statement:

God will DRIVE and PUSH and we will TAKE.

In other words, “all you need to do is let God do for you what He wants to do. He will drive and push them out and you will take the land that is left by them. It's yours and available if you'll just simply take it.”

Now what he's saying here is this is the way won in the past. “You've seen it, God intervened on our behalf and fought for us, and now you need to remember that for the future this is exactly the same plan. God is waiting right now to do for you what He did then, 20 years ago.”

Now there's a wonderful verse in Hebrews 13 that says:

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He's waiting to do for us what He's done for others. And yet He has to find a heart that is submissive and ready and

available.

2 Chronicles 16:9

His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are right or perfect toward Him...

Now basically He's challenging the leaders. And He says, "Look, the ball is in your court! It's been served up. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to sit down and just take what you have and let the enemy live here and live in compromise rather than in separation? Or are you going to rise up and take it?" God is waiting for action on their part and He will respond to that action.

Now verses 6-11 are the heart of his message. Okay? If there's ever words that ought to be put in gold in the Bible, it's these next verses. We can't help but be impressed with the man. He lives to 110 years ultimately. But the man is a sparkling illustration of a servant. A man who has been faithful in his walk with God.

When a man gets ready to die, usually he reminisces on things about his life that made it together. It would be great to have a recorder so we could get all that wisdom down.

Joshua is telling his story right now. And these next verses give us the keys to win. This is:

II. The way you win in your walk with God—verses 6-11

Creath Davis wrote a book called *The Making of a Winner* and it's a story about Fred Akers who used to be the head football coach of the University of Texas. And during that time Creath was quoting Akers as saying this:

(The Making of a Winner by Creath Davis)

What Coach Akers said to the team at the end of the spring workouts turned out to be quite prophetic. “Don't be surprised to see yourself rated fourth, fifth or sixth in the pre-season polls, but don't come back if you believe it.”

Football teaches many principles which work in life, as well as in athletics. Commitment, discipline and pure old hard work are the necessary ingredients for being a successful athlete or for being successful in anything. For a young man coming up I would encourage him to make up his mind as to where he wants to go. Set your goals high enough to stretch you and go for it. Don't give up just because it's tough or because you feel like quitting. Hang in there and do your best. You'll always be glad you did.

(source unknown)

It was Mark Twain who said:

“Plan for the future because that's where you are going to spend the rest of your life.”

(source unknown)

And all Joshua is telling us is we have to dance with the one that brung us. We need to just do what we've been doing. God's still waiting. He hasn't changed. Don't abandon our principles. Don't look for a new program and a new plan. Let's just use now in the present what happened in the past. It worked—we won with it.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

God is faithful and He's waiting to remain and be faithful even now. In these next verses we have great advice from one who made it work.

We have found in these verses the 9 KEYS to Joshua's success. That's why they should be framed in gold. They're spelled out in verses 6-11.

Now the general comes out in the old man again. He barks 9 COMMANDS here—just BAM! BAM! BAM!

There are going to be 4 POSITIVES and 5 NEGATIVES here—just one right after the other in these verses. But every one of them has some significance for us in our walk with God. Let's outline them.

v. 6 “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without

turning aside to the right or to the left.

“Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left.”

Command #1: “Be strong”

Okay, how can we do that? Well, we cannot be strong in our own strength according to 2 Corinthians 12:9. Paul said:

2 Corinthians 12:9

His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

When we're weak then we're strong because we're availing ourselves of His strength. We're dependent. That's:

Philippians 4:13

I am ready for anything through the strength of the one who indwells me.

Isaiah 40:31

but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...

Colossians 1:11

strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power...

And so, as He lives in us, we can be strong—#1.

But Command #2 is so great—look at that.

Command #2: “be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left.”

Okay:

1. “be strong”
2. “be careful to obey”

Now what makes that so exciting? Well, when something works we really like to share it.

Way back in chapter 1 of Joshua, when Joshua was beginning all this, at his commissioning service the Lord spoke to him. Now let’s read the Lord’s message to Joshua when he started this and look at the comparison to what we see right now. This is what just makes this so great. Listen to this. Here’s the Lord speaking:

Joshua 1:6-9

“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land that I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. 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. Don't let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; 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. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

It's almost identical, isn't it?

Don't turn to the right or to the left. We hone in and stay through. We stay with the book and we need to be absorbed in the Word of God. We're going to be successful.

Now when it comes time for him to talk, what's he say? He does exactly what Paul told young Timothy in:

2 Timothy 2:1, 2

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Keep the cycle going! And present the good stuff.

Basically, he's saying, “Stick to the Book.”

Tim LaHaye has done a lot of work on temperament traits and

he's written a book called *Your Temperament, Discover Its Potential*. In it he makes one statement about the Word of God that was so great:

(Your Temperament, Discover Its Potential by Tim LaHaye)

A consistent feeding of one's mind upon the Word of God produces some interesting results. Consider the following revolutionary benefits: [and he just takes a bunch of them and he puts them down]

Joshua 1:8 - It makes your way prosperous and gives success.

Psalms 1:3 - It produces fruitfulness.

Psalms 119:11 - It keeps [you] from sin.

John 14:21 - God reveals himself increasingly to [the] keepers of His Word.

John 15:3 - The Word cleanses us.

John 15:7 - The Word produces power in prayer.

John 15:11 - The Word brings joy to our hearts.

1 John 2:13, 14 - The Word gives victory over the wicked one.
(source unknown)

Those are just a few of the things that happen when a person

is involved in the Word of God.

Someone said:

“Life is what’s coming, not what was.”
(source unknown)

And as we face the future we have to recognize that there are only two things we have to do in life. We have to die and we have to live. And we make up all the rest in between. And it’s that in between, if we’re possessed by the Word of God, that makes all the difference.

For Joshua he’s been right in the Book. He’s been staying right in the middle of the course.

Now verse 7 has 5 NEGATIVES in it. Verse 6 had 2 POSITIVES. Now we’re going to grab 5 negatives. And here he’s basically talking about their association with those people who are still there in the land.

v. 7 Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them.

“Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them.”

What are the negative ones?

The first ones—the positive ones—are:

1. “Be strong” and
2. “be careful to obey.”

But now here come the negatives—five of them in a row:

3. “Don’t associate with these nations that remain among you;”

We might ask, what does all of that mean? Here are some verses of scripture to chew on along that line.

2 Corinthians 6:17

Therefore come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord; ...

Romans 12:2

Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...

Daniel 1:8

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s meat.

He made a decision not to go along.

Alright the fourth one is in the next phrase:

4. “don’t invoke the names of their gods”

In other words, don’t call on their gods for blessing or cursing. Don’t associate with them in this regard. We’re not to be involved in religious idolatry.

Where do we get some verses on that?

How about:

1 John 5:21

My little children, keep yourselves from idols.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

Don’t be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

So “don’t invoke the names of their gods.”

5. “don’t...swear by them.”

Don’t bring their gods into your oaths and your commitments.

6. “don’t...serve them” and

7. “don’t...bow down to them.”

We have a great illustration of that in Daniel chapter 3. Remember that story? We have Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the story of them.

Daniel 3:13-18

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold that I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue

us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

That’s what Joshua is pleading with these people to do. And we get the feeling after these 20 years that some of them have been messing around with some of that or he wouldn’t be making such an issue of it here in some of the last words he says. He can see them heading in that direction.

Okay in verse 6 we have 2 positives, in verse 7 we have 5 negatives—so there are 2 more in these verses.

v. 8 But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.

“But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.”

Like that?

He says “hold fast to the Lord your God [like you have done up] until now.”

Ever found it hard to affirm someone? We want to challenge them but we also want to encourage them.

That little phrase at the end is an encouragement. He says “hold fast to the Lord” like you’ve been dying right up “until now.” Don’t let go of Him.

Hebrews 6:17-19

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, ...

“hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.”

He says, “Just keep going like you’ve been going and everything’s going to be alright.”

v. 9 “The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you.

“The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you.”

Why should they “hold fast to the Lord”?

Because up until now, every time they've had a battle the Lord's been faithful to them, has led them into victory, so there's no need to change. God's given the victory to them.

v. 10 One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised.

“One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised.”

Well we learn when God is in it, statistics are meaningless aren't they? When God is fighting, one can “root a thousand.”

Any biblical illustrations that jump up as red flags at that point to remind us of someone?

Remember old Samson picking up the jawbone of a donkey and slaying a thousand Philistines in the strength which the Lord had provided?

We read in:

Judges 15:14

And he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.

Statistics are meaningless when operating in the strength of the Lord. That's what Joshua's telling them here.

Now verse 11 gives us the last one of the keys.

v. 11 So be very careful to love the Lord your God.

“So be very careful to love the Lord your God.”

Okay now if we were to try to put that together, just to give us a little capsule of what made this general so successful and why he did so well, we could take those nine things and we can put **FOUR POSITIVE** and **FIVE NEGATIVE**. And we can draw them down into capsule form—and that's what we want to do here.

FOUR POSITIVE:

1. “be strong,”
2. “be careful to obey,”
3. “hold fast to the Lord,” and
4. “love the Lord.”

The FIVE NEGATIVES:

1. “don't associate,”

2. “don’t invoke the names of their gods,”
3. “don’t swear by them,”
4. “don’t serve them,” and
5. “don’t bow down to them.”

And so, he’s given them a fabulous challenge basically focused on the subject of separation. The challenge is don’t associate with them, but hold fast to your Lord. Love Him, be obedient to Him. The positives are the direction he wants them to go. The negative is where he wants restraint.

Now the red lights on the dashboard come in:

III. The WARNING—verses 12 and 13

When we get to verses 12 and 13, he sounds a very, very serious WARNING.

He’s been talking about a waiting God, he’s been talking about a way to win, but now it’s time to warn the people of something very, very serious—verse 12.

v. 12 “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them,

“But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain”—see there’s the whole problem—“the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them,”

All big IF’s.

Lights on the dashboard:

“if you turn away,”

“if you...ally yourself,”

“if you intermarry,”

“if you...associate”—then, what’s going to happen?

Here’s a warning:

v. 13 then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.

“then you may be sure”

“You can be absolutely, totally convinced this is what’s going to happen.” It’s the other side of the equation.

“then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you.”

“You can be sure that the Lord your God will not do what He’s been doing in the past if you compromise with these nations and you go along with this.”

“Instead,”—these nations that will remain with you—“will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.”

If we want to read the tragic story, go on and read the book of Judges because it is the story of whips for their backs because they become enslaved by these people and they do find themselves to be “snares and traps” for them.

Are we reminded of anything further in the life of Samson? He’s a classic illustration of what happened.

Samson, as he was in the lap of Delilah in Judges 16:20, revealed the secret of his strength. She administered a haircut and then she said:

Judges 16:20

“Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his

sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

Of course, he’s whipped right on the spot. His eyes are gouged out, he’s put into prison and he’s submitted to servanthood in grinding the grain. That’s his job. He lost his strength.

In the book of Samuel, we read Ichabod, the glory of the Lord has departed.” (see 1 Samuel 4:21)

What a sad, sad thing when God has to finally say that’s it. And isn’t it interesting, it’s done for a bunch of people who are just sitting around doing nothing. Finally, the day comes when it’s too late and these people are not driving out the enemy like God had said.

As a result, the enemy’s going to rise up and be a real problem to them. And that is a major warning coming from the lips of this old general. God is patient and gracious with us.

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, ... then will I hear from heaven, I would heal their land, I would forgive their sin.

There’ll be snares, traps, whips and thorns. And all of this is going to be done “until you perish” in this “good land, which the Lord your God has given you.”

The Lord's very patient, isn't He? And He's not going to do this prematurely. He's going to provide plenty of opportunity.

So many people today are so sidetracked and sitting in the ditch and really are not doing anything significant for the Lord. They're just biding their time until they can go on to glory.

Much of what's going on in Christian circles today is arguing over theological suppositions and points of view.

“Are you a 4-point or a 5-point Calvinist? Do you believe in predestination? Do you believe in this? And do you believe in that? And are you a pre-mil or a post-mil? Are you a pre-trib or a post-trib or mid-trib or whatever?”

We would fight for that and we would shed blood of our brothers and sisters over those things. We think that it's fine that we argue these great points of theology.

Corrie ten Boom was asked about her theological position. Listen to this:

(Corrie ten Boom: Her Life, Her Faith by C. C. Carlson)

Corrie's theology, if you could call it that, was useful, not theoretical. When people tried to get her embroiled in theological differences, she would tell about conversations she had with fellow prisoners in the concentration camp.

“We were sitting around the Bible twice a day. We didn't

know what church backgrounds others had, and it didn't interest us. We knew that we were facing death daily. I had many personal talks with my fellow prisoners. I didn't ask, What is your opinion about predestination? I was not interested if the other person was a pre- or a post- or a millenarian. I asked questions like, Do you know that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, also for your sins, and that He loves you? Did you give your heart to Him? Did you confess your sins to Him and repent? If she said yes to such questions, and then I saw her disappear into the hospital where most of the patients died, or if she went on her way to the gas chamber, then I was happy to know that she was safe in the arms of Jesus, who would carry her through the valley of the shadow of death to the house of the Father. When facing death, theology is unimportant.”
(source unknown)

We have to wake up to the fact that we are facing death. We have people all around us that are facing death and we have not communicated the message because we are so sidetracked in a lot of these other things. And these people have gotten sidetracked, being comfortable in the land—and live and let live is basically their philosophy. Let these nations be here, let everything go just the way it is.

And Joshua has to come along and put in a barb. “Watch it! You're drifting far off-field and you could perish from this good land by the decisions that you're making.”

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? ...

Now this brings us to:

IV. THE WRAP-UP—verses 14-16

This is the end of his message. But a rich conclusion in these final verses.

v. 14 “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”

“Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”

Joshua admits it:

“I know I’m getting ready to check out. I’m going the way of all the earth. It’s getting close.”

We’ve seen everything he’s done in verse 3 and now in verse 14 we know with all our heart and soul that none of “the good promises of the Lord...have failed.”

We see in the life of Joseph as we have Joseph down in the land of Egypt and his brothers come and they bow before him. And 22 years before that God had given him the promise that was going to happen. And now God fulfills that wonderful promise for him. And here again Joshua returns.

And he's saying, "God can be counted on. He can be relied upon. He is a promise-keeping God."

Negatively, not one "has failed."

Positively, everyone "has been fulfilled."

Isn't that great?

v. 15 But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you.

"But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so"—just like that—"the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you."

It's "good promises" in verse 13 and

it's a "good land" in verses 13 and 15.

"That's what the Lord wants for you. But if you aren't going to

listen to what I've got to say and you're going to continue to compromise and live like this, then I can tell you all those other things are going to come true too."

v. 16 If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

"If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

Lamentations 3:22-26

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

He is faithful. He will do it.

He is so faithful to fulfill His promises. He's still alive and He still works.

This speech has had four major points:

1. We have a WAITING GOD who wants to be today what He was to them before.
2. We have the WAY TO WIN.
3. We have the WARNING.
4. We have the WRAP-UP.

All the good promises have been faithful to be fulfilled.

Out of that speech, what'd we get? We have 9 lessons.

Lesson #1: The Lord should become more precious to us the older we get.

By the way, that's the way your marriage ought to be too. The older we get we ought to start being a blessing to each other and really enrich one another's lives. The older we get, the Lord should become more precious to us.

Lesson #2: Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Lesson #3: God is waiting to do what he has done in the past.

Lesson #4: God expects us to come out from the world and to be separate from it.

Lesson #5: The key to Joshua's success in life is his obedient heart to the word of God.

Lesson #6:

It is a tragedy when Ichabod, "the glory of the Lord departed," is written over a life.

Lesson #7: In these days of apostasy are you holding fast and loving the Lord with all your heart.

Lesson #8: Every promise was fulfilled, not one failed.

Lesson #9: The focus of Joshua's whole life is the Lord his God.

It would be good for us to meditate for just a moment, as we think of this great man's life, upon the words of this hymn:

Ever lift Thy face upon me
As I work and wait for Thee;
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus,
Earth's dark shadows flee.

Brightness of my Father's glory,
Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting,
Fill me with Thy grace.

Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art;

I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.

Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power,
Thou has made me whole.
(source unknown)

Father, we've walked with this man for many, many miles. We have seen the secret to his life. And that is, submission and obedience to the word of God. May we learn from that. May we seek Your precepts and Your truth. May we hold fast to You and love You with all of our hearts and be faithful to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only. Father, help us to expectantly come to You in prayer and see You do mighty things on our behalf. Thank You for Your kindness and Your graciousness to us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Practical Study of JOSHUA

“The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

Study Number Twenty-Three – Joshua 23:1-16

NOTES

v. 1 After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then old and well advanced in years,

v. 2 summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am old and well advanced in years.

v. 3 You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you.

v. 4 Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west.

v. 5 The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you.

v. 6 “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left.

v. 7 Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them.

v. 8 But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.

v. 9 “The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you.

v. 10 One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised.

v. 11 So be very careful to love the Lord your God.

v. 12 “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them,

NOTES

v. 13 then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.

v. 14 “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

v. 15 But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you.

v. 16 If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 23:1-16 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Joshua do in verses 1 & 2?

3. To whom does Joshua attribute all of their success during his lifetime, according to verse 3?

4. What does he command them to do in verses 6-8?

5. What are they to be careful to do, according to verse 11?

6. What warning does he give to them in verses 12 & 13?

7. What does he say about the promises of God in verse 14?

8. What final warning does he give in verses 15 & 16?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Lord should become more precious to us the older we get.

LESSON #2: Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

LESSON #3: God is waiting to do not what He has done in the past.

LESSON #4: God expects us to come out from the world and to be separate from it.

LESSON #5: The key to Joshua's success in life is his obedient heart to the Word of God.

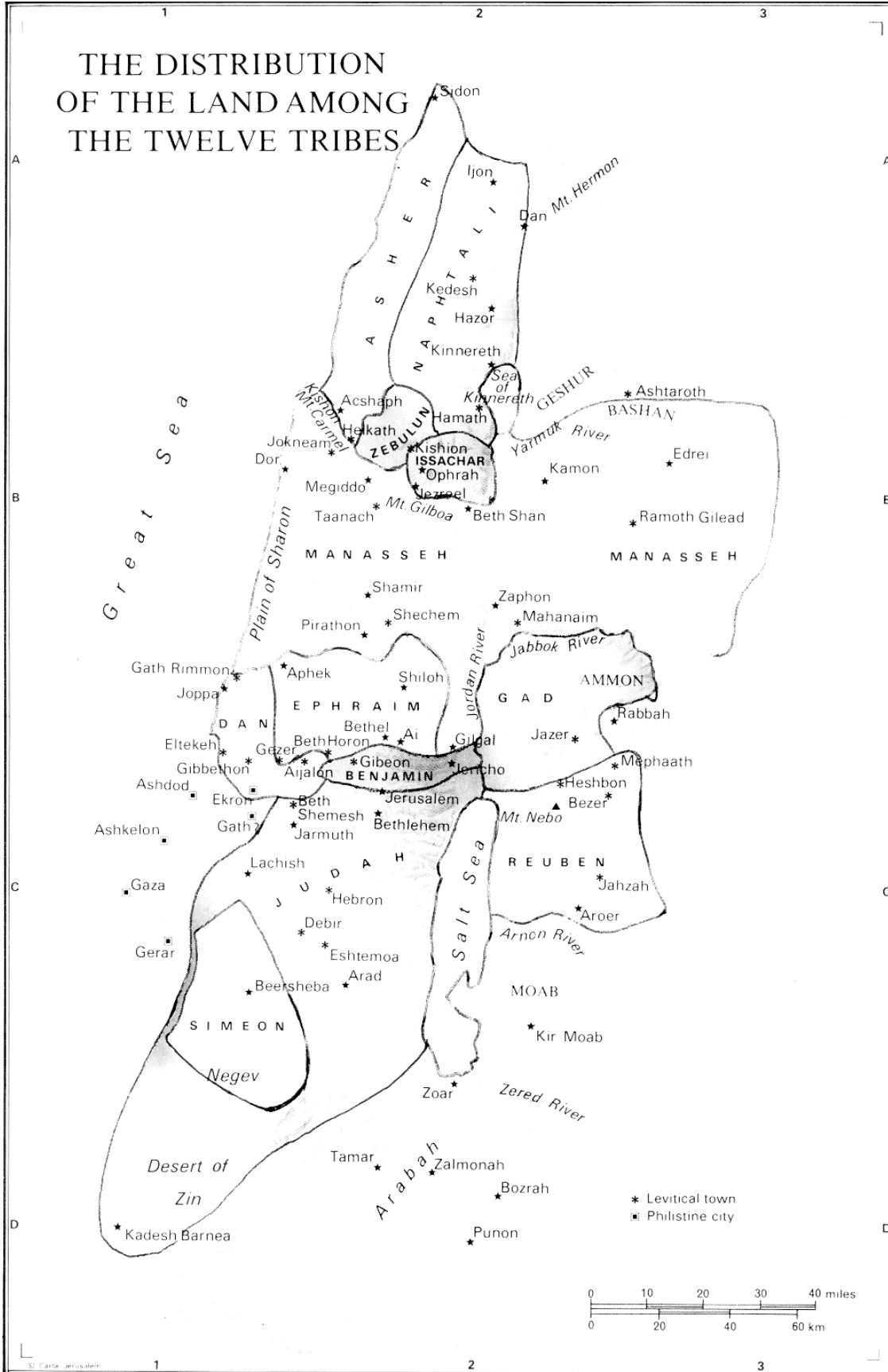
LESSON #6: It is a tragedy when Ichabod, "the glory of the Lord departed," is written over a life.

LESSON #7: In these days of apostasy, are you holding fast and loving the Lord with all your heart?

LESSON #8: Every promise was fulfilled, not one failed.

LESSON #9: The focus of Joshua's whole life is the Lord his God.

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