

Joshua 23 - Joshua's Farewell Address: Encouragement, Blessings & Cursings

III. The conclusion of Joshua's ministry emphasizing conditions necessary for Israel to stay in the land (Joshua 22:1—24:33)

- (2) Joshua's final sermon (23:1-16)
 - (A) Past blessings for obedience (23:1-12)
 - (B) Future curses for disobedience (23:13-16)
- (3) Second covenant renewal at Shechem (24:1-33)

(2) Joshua's final sermon (23:1-16)

Remain a separated people, for three reasons:

- (1) Because of what the Lord had done for Israel (23:3-4)
 - Egypt, Amalekites, etc. These Gentile nations were God's enemies and therefore must be Israel's enemies.
 - (2) Because of what the Lord said to Israel (23:5-10)
 - The secret of Joshua's success was his devotion to the Word of God (1:7-9,13-18; 8:30-35; 11:12,15; 24:26-27)
 - (3) Because of what the Lord would do to Israel (23:11-16)
 - The Word of God is a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). If we obey it, God will bless and help us; if we disobey it, God will chasten us until we submit to Him (Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:6)
- v13: "snares.. Traps.. scourges... thorns..." Such is the description of the wicked nations which the Lord would use to discipline His people.
 - v14: the same place where Jacob took the household gods that Rachel had carried off and hid them under a oak tree by Shechem (Gen 31:30-34; 35:2,4)

God will not allow His children to sin successfully. — Spurgeon

- Three times in this brief address, Joshua calls Canaan "this good land."
 - At the Burning Bush (Ex 3:8)
 - After forty days of investigation (Num 14:7)
 - In Moses' farewell address (10x) (Deut 1:25,35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7,10; 9:6; 11:17)
- Meditating on the goodness of God is a strong motivation for obedience

- James connects the goodness of God with our resisting temptation (James 1:13-17)
- Nathan used the same approach confronting King David (2 Sam 12:1-15)
- With the Prodigal Son, it was not his sinfulness but rather his father's goodness that brought him to repentance and return home (Luke 15:17; Rom 2:4)
- The most important point was that Israel is to remain a separated people, not infected with the wickedness around them (23:7-8; Ex 34:10-17; Deut 7:2-4). Disobedience would be a gradual thing (Cf. Rom 12:1-21; 1 John 2:15-17)
 - The word "cleave" in Rom 12:8 is the same as in Gen 2:24
 - Israel was "married" to YHWH at Mt. Sinai (Cf. Jer 2:1-3; Ezek 16) and was expected to be a faithful spouse and cleave to the Lord (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4)
 - Instead, she became an unfaithful wife, a prostitute, as she turned to the gods of other nations.
 - So, too, the whore of Babylon (Rev 17)
- The promise in 23:10 is a quote from Deut 32:30, showing that Joshua knew the Word of God (Cf. Lev 26:7-8; Joshua 1:8; Ps 1:2; 119:11).
- Joshua's three main admonitions:
 - Keep God's Word (23:6)
 - Cleave to the Lord (23:8)
 - Love the Lord (23:11)

Joshua 23

(A) Past blessings for obedience (23:1-12)

1 Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years,

1 Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years,

1 Many years later, after the LORD had given peace between Israel and all its surrounding enemies, and after Joshua had become very old,

1 And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.

2 that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, their heads, their judges, and their officers, and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years.

2 that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years.

2 Joshua called together all Israel, including their leaders, officials, judges, and tribal officers. He told them, "I am old now after having lived many years.

2 And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:
- Joshua wanted to address the leaders of Israel, just as Moses had done before his death (Deut 31)

3 And 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 been fighting for you.

3 And 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 been fighting for you.

3 You have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to all of these nations on your behalf, because it has been the LORD your God who has been fighting on your behalf.

3 And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you.

- Instead of talking about their former glory days or current good times, Joshua led them to remain focused on God

4 See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have eliminated, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the west.

4 See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun.

4 Now look, I have allocated these nations that remain as an inheritance for your tribes, including all of the nations that I have eliminated, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea to the west.

4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

5 And the LORD your God, He will thrust them away from you and drive them from you; and you will take possession of their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

5 The LORD your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

5 The LORD your God will expel them in front of you, driving them out of your sight. You will take possession of this land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

5 And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

- A promise of God's continued faithfulness in fighting for them and giving them victory over their enemies, as long as they kept His covenant with them

6 Be very determined, then, to keep and do everything that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, so that you will not turn aside from it to the right or to the left,

6 Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,

6 Stand very strong, then, so you can obey and carry out everything written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning neither to the right nor to the left of it.

6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;

7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain with you, or mention the name of their gods, or make *anyone* swear *by them*, or serve them, or bow down to them.

7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make *anyone* swear *by them*, or serve them, or bow down to them.

7 That way, you will not mingle with those nations that remain among you, nor mention the name of their gods, nor make oaths by them, nor serve them, nor worship them.

7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

- Joshua knew the people would be tempted to look to foreign gods

8 But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

8 But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

8 Instead, you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done today,

8 But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

9 For the LORD has driven out great and mighty nations from before you; and as for you, no one has stood against you to this day.

9 For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day.

9 because the LORD has expelled great and strong nations ahead of you. Now as for you, not a single man has been able to oppose you right to this day.

9 For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

- Joshua encouraged the Israelites to remain loyal, and he promised them that God would faithfully "drive out" the Canaanites that still remained in the Land

10 One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you.

10 One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you.

10 A single man makes a thousand flee, because the LORD your God is the one who is fighting for you, just as he promised you.

10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

- For Israel, *Yahweh* claimed to fulfill all the functions for which other nations needed multiple gods

- Joshua passed on to Israel the secret of success and prosperity that the Lord had given him at the beginning of the conquest (1:6-7,9,18)

— God's promise of occupation of the land was not unconditional; Israel's continued faithfulness was required

11 So take great care for yourselves that you love the LORD your God.

11 So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God.

11 "So be very diligent to love the LORD your God,

11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

- The nation as a whole had been faithful to God during Joshua's time of leadership, so he didn't mention individual sins and failures

- Joshua, like Moses, instructed the people to "love" *Yahweh* as well as obey Him

12 For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of **thesenations**, these which remain with you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you,

12 For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you,

12 because if you ever turn back and cling to those who remain of these nations by intermarrying with them and associating one with another,

12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

- "...these nations" - Joshua's main concern seems to be the nations that remained in the Land; he refers to them 7x in this passage

(B) Future curses for disobedience (23:13-16)

13 know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

13 know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

13 know for certain that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations ahead of you. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap for you, a whip to your backs, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you.

13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

- Joshua also pointed out the consequences of failing to obey God out of love
— If Israel does not do her part, God will not do His

God does His part to deserve and receive such love. God does not force his attentions upon man. But the man who ignores God's claims finds His punishment.

The grave danger of crossing the Jordan River, facing an enemy in a strange land, encountering the unknown on every hand, and meeting fear on every side, had kept Israel close to the Lord. Joshua recognized that now since they had entered into rest and were enjoying prosperity and plenty, they would drift away from God. That is the story of human nature. It never changes. [J Vernon McGee]

14 "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; they all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.

14 "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.

14 "Look here: today I'm going down the path that everyone on earth takes, and you know with all your hearts and souls that not a single word of all of the good things that the LORD

your God spoke about you has failed to happen. Everything has been fulfilled about you— not one of them has failed.

14 And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

15 But it will come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the warnings, until He has eliminated you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

15 It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

15 However, just as all of the good things have come about that the LORD your God promised, so also the LORD will bring upon you all of the threats until he has destroyed you from possessing this good land that he has given you.

15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

16 When you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and you go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from the good land which He has given you."

16 When you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you."

16 When you break the covenant of the LORD your God that he commanded you to obey by going to serve other gods and worship them, then the anger of the LORD will blaze against you, and you will perish quickly from this good land that he gave you."

16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

- Verses 14-16 are a summary of Joshua's main idea from v1-13

- His point: God would be just as faithful in sending *discipline* on His people, if they transgressed His covenant in the future, as he had been in sending *blessing* because they had been obedient in the past.

The initial success of the conquest had been due to God's blessings on His *obedient* people. The complete extermination of the Canaanites, and the Israelites' full possession and enjoyment of the land, would require the same obedience and blessing.

The motive for obedience should be *gratitude*. Our *present* obedience, loyalty, and love (v6,8,11) should spring naturally, from appreciation for God's faithfulness in the *past*, as well as from confidence in His promises for the *future*.