

Study 19 – The Book of Joshua – Chapter 23

Outline: Joshua's Farewell Address

Let's look at chapter 23 in this study

Discussion Questions for Chapter 23

- Why did Joshua call all the rulers of the people together?
- What was the basic content of his message?
- Who did Joshua give the credit to for the successes seen in his life? What lesson do we learn from this?
- What reminders did Joshua give them? What do we learn about his leadership of the people from these reminders?
- What were the positive things they were to do?
- What were the negative things they were to avoid?
- What would the consequences be if they intermarried and clung to the other nations?
- How confident was Joshua that these negative consequences would come if they disobeyed (23:13)?
- What does verse 14 tell us about God's character?
- What might cause them to begin to doubt God's goodness or promises? What may cause us to begin to doubt God's goodness or promises?
- In verse 15 what is the other side of God's truthfulness which Joshua reveals? Why is it important for us to understand both sides?
- What key principles do we learn from this passage? How can we apply them to our daily lives?

Cross-References

On God's promises:

Jeremiah 1:12 – Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am ^[a]ready to perform My word.”

Ezekiel 12:28 – Therefore, say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign Lord.

2 Peter 3:9 – The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

On the consequences of sin:

Proverbs 14:12 – There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Isaiah 59:2 – But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

On standing firm:

1 Corinthians 10:12 – Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

On treasuring and clinging to God's Word:

Job 23:12 – I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

Proverbs 3:7 – Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

Teaching Points, relating to the chapter and the discussion questions above.

1. **Joshua wanted to prepare the next generation** – Here we see that Joshua was old and advanced in years. Soon he would leave and go to be with the Lord. What would happen to the Israelites after he was gone? What would happen to the next generation? Would the work Joshua started continue or disappear without him around? Joshua was a disciple maker.

Disciple makers desire to train up the next generation so that even when they are absent or have to leave the work will go on. Moses had trained and prepared Joshua to take over the work when he was gone. Now Joshua wanted to make sure others were ready to take the mantle. In the book of Judges, we learned that the effort to train up the next generation was not entirely successful. But here we learned that Joshua tried. He cared about the people. He cared

about what would happen to them when he was gone. And he did what he could to help encourage them to follow the Lord themselves because of what He had done for them.

2. Joshua gives all the glory to God for the successes in his life – When many people approach the end of their lives, they begin to think about what legacy they will leave behind. The politician wants to be remembered for the good policies he has enacted. The general wants to be remembered for his victories. The businessman wants to be remembered for his savvy and innovation. The sports star or movie star want to be remembered for his achievements. Many go so far as to say, “you will live on through other people's memory of you.”

But Joshua is like none of these. He did not ask people to remember his military victories, his care for his people, or any of his achievements. He was not thinking about himself at all. What did he want people to remember? Joshua wants the people to remember God's work on their behalf (see verses 3,5,9, and 10). He was not concerned about his legacy. He was concerned about God's legacy, wanting God to get all the glory for what has happened. Through this we see Joshua's humility. And we also see the motivation for all of his serving on their behalf.

Application: What is our legacy? What will people remember us for? It should not be our goal to be remembered by others at all. Our goal should be to build up God's kingdom on earth while we are still here and have a chance. The goal of your wedding should be to glorify God. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Therefore, we should not desire to get praise or compliments from people.

3. Reminder to stand very firm – Many parents remind their children to be good right before leaving the house. Here Joshua was doing the same. He wouldn't be around to keep the people in line. Instead, he gave them several strong reminders that it was their responsibility to obey the Lord's commands. They would have to do this on their own without anybody holding their hands or checking on them every day. Joshua told them to stand very firm, to do all that is written in the law, and to not turn aside to the right or the left. He also

reminded them to cling to the Lord and to take diligent heed to love the Lord.

What was Joshua concerned about? Why did he use such strong language? How could the people make sure that they followed his instructions?

The key point is that the people must have their own relationship with the Lord. If they relied on Joshua, then when he left, they would fall. Unfortunately, in the book of Judges we see that the next generation did fall. The next generation followed the Lord out of habit, not conviction. But this generation did continue to follow the Lord even after Joshua passed away. What could Joshua and the older generation have done better or differently to help ensure that the next generation followed the Lord faithfully?

Application: Firstly, we need to make sure that we are not reliant on any person for our spiritual walk. You should not rely on teacher, friend, missionary, or spouse. Secondly, we need to do everything we can to equip the next generation of spiritual and biological children so that they will have their own walks with the Lord and follow Him even when we are not there.

4. Verse 9 – No man has stood before you – God supernaturally helped his people by causing their enemies to flee, panic, fear, and run away. He was fighting a battle for them which they could not see or feel, but which nonetheless had a major impact on their lives. It would have been foolish for them to take credit for the panic of their enemies or discount God's work just because it was sometimes invisible. Whether we see it or not, God's work in our lives is ongoing. He and His legions of angels are fighting against Satan and his demons. On our part, we should be appreciative, and have faith. In addition, we should pray diligently to ask God to continue doing His invisible work in our lives.

5. One of your men puts to flight a thousand – God gave far greater success than could ever be achieved on their own. At the same time, they did have a responsibility to boldly march to war. God's working on our behalf does not give us a good excuse to lounge around and do nothing. We still have a responsibility. At the same time, by obeying His plans and strategies for our lives, we can be successful in every area.

6. Warning about the consequences of sin – Joshua did not want his people to be naive or take God's grace for granted. He warned them that if they disobey the Lord, they would face terrible consequences for their sins. He warned them not to presume upon God's promises. In case they would forget and only remember His “good promises,” Joshua reminds them that the Lord also made threats, meaning He promised punishment and a curse for disobedience. God's promises would all come true. His promises for good would come true if they obeyed. His promises for punishment would come true if they disobeyed. Which kind of promises do most people tend to focus on?

Application: Of course, most people often remember only God's promises for good. They remember God's loving and gracious and forgiving side and ignore His holiness and justice. It is a foolhardy mistake. God's patience and mercy are long, but His justice may come in an instant if we are living in sin and rebellion. The Israelites would themselves learn this the hard way again and again. Let us learn from their mistakes so we don't experience the judgment of the Lord ourselves.

