

Keep Pressing On

Joshua 23:6-14

August 2, 2009

Intro

As we come to chapter 23 we find Joshua old and advanced in years. He died at the age of 110, so at this point he would be nearly that old. Before he died, however, he gathered all Israel together, that is to say he called for the elders, the leaders, their judges, and their officers in order to give his final message to the nation.

Israel had seen the mighty hand of God fulfilling the promises that God had given to them and to their fathers. This was not the unfaithful generation that had died in the wilderness; this was the generation of those who were victorious because they faithfully trusted that God would do what he said.

So Joshua does not bring them together in order to correct them or to rebuke them, he wants to make sure that they never fail to stand on the promises of God; that they would never fall back, that they would always remain a faithful people so that they would always have the blessings they had already obtained, but not only that, there was more to do. They had inherited the land which God gave to them, but it remained for each individual tribe to fully process what God had given them. There were still pockets of enemy resistance and Joshua calls them to completely possess the land of promise.

We see in scripture that these things were written for our instruction; these things were written for our example so that we should learn from them. When Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years it was a picture of an immaturity of faith. They did not trust God, therefore they did not obtain the promises he desired for them. That entire generation died in the wilderness and a new generation rose up that did trust God and therefore they obtained the promises.

God calls us as well to be victorious; to have a maturity of faith that believes God's Word so that we can also obtain the promises God intends for us.

But having obtained those promises, we must continue to walk in faithfulness. Are there pockets of resistance that remain in our lives as well? And that is the main point of Joshua's message to the leaders of Israel; faith is a condition of being. In other words, we are to continue to live faithfully. We are to continue to stand on the promises which God gave us.

This message that Joshua gives to the leaders of Israel is a very appropriate message for us as well. These are important lessons in maintaining a steadfast life of faithfully trusting God.

I. Stay on Course

- 1 In verse six, Joshua admonishes them to stay the course. He had been there at the helm, leading them into victory but also making certain that they stayed steadfast with God.
- 2 Now as he nears death, he knows how vital it will be that they stay the course to keep and to do everything written in God's Word for them.
- 3 That's the key for us as well.

A. Be zealous after God's Word

- 4 Verse six begins with the phrase, "Be very firm." Other versions say, "Be courageous," or, "Be very strong." The idea is the same, they need to decide in advance that this is the key to completely obtaining the promises that God intends for them.
- 5 In other words, this question needs to be settled now.
- 6 The scriptures admonish us over and over how important it is to make this decision and stand on this decision that we will follow after God's Word.
- 7 Decide now; settle the question in your heart and stand there in firm resolution to that decision.

Colossians 3:1-2, Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. *Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.*

Hebrews 12:1-2, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,*

Illus- I had the opportunity to speak to our graduating class in Bible school and this was the verse that God put on my heart. And I remember using illustration of trying to walk in a straight line in the sand at the beach. The only way to do it is by fixing your eyes on a rock in front of you and walk straight toward it.

- 8 But the word also has the meaning of being zealous. In other words, there is to be a great zeal added to that decision.

2 Timothy 2:15, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Illus - I remember reading the Chronicles of Narnia stories to my children and one of the characters that we admired was a mouse by the name of Reepicheep...

B. Love not the world

- 1 That is the point Joshua makes in verse seven. They are to be very firm, being very diligent to do all that's written in God's Word so that they may not associate with those nations which remained among them.
- 2 They left these pockets of resistance and these will be their undoing if they do not understand the dangers.

- 3 This is part of staying on course. And the point is made to us as well. There is a great danger in loving the world and the things of the world. That's why the Scripture tells us to be in the world, but not of the world.
- 4 There are several other scriptures that help us...

1 John 2:15-17, Do not love the world nor the things in the world... For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

- 5 This is critical for the believer who wants to live the victorious life. Choose carefully the company you keep for you will become like your friends.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

Illus - This was also Solomon's undoing.

1 Kings 11:1-4 Solomon's wives turned his heart away from God.

II. Be Welded to the Lord

- 1 In verse eight Joshua admonished the leaders of Israel that they must continue to cling to the Lord their God as they had done.
- 2 From this word "cling" comes the modern Hebrew word for glue. It's used elsewhere in scripture to symbolize the oneness between a husband and wife.
- 3 But I think a better word would be to be welded together. And the results become clear.

A. God is the strength of your life

- 1 That's the point Joshua makes to them in verses 9 and 10. They are to cling to the Lord their God because they have already seen the results. No nation has been able to stand before them and one puts a thousand to flight.

Illus - You can weld something weak to something strong and the thing that was weak will now become strong.

- 2 That's the point that Paul was making to the church at Corinth...

2 Corinthians 12:9-10, And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me... for when I am weak, then I am strong.

App - How is it possible that one man can put 1,000 to flight? Only if the Lord your God

fights for you, just as he promised you.

B. Know these things with your heart

- 3 In verse 14, Joshua said to them, "You know with all your hearts and with all your souls..."
- 4 This is an absolutely vital point for us to understand. We even have an expression today that captures the same point, we say, "You know in your heart that this is true."
- 5 The problem will always be the heart.
- 6 Don't just know these things intellectually; know these things in your heart. Jesus accused the Pharisees of this in the book of Matthew.

Matthew 15:1-14 They honored God only with their lips

- 7 Knowing these things in our heart is a description of faith. We see something similar to that in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:1-2, 6, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval... And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

- 8 If a man lacks faith, the scripture describes that one as being double-minded and unstable in all his ways.

Illus – It's like partial obedience, if there is such a thing. What good does it do to take the garbage halfway out to the curb?

The word of God profits us when it is combined with faith.

C. God's Word does not fail

- 9 This is the point that Joshua is making in verse 14. They know with all their hearts that God was absolutely faithful to every word he spoke.
- 10 Joshua began that verse by saying, "Now behold, today I'm going the way of all the earth." Joshua is old and advanced in years, but he is a man like Caleb, he is an example of steadfast faithfulness over the long years of his life and God has blessed him for it.
- 11 He has stood on this truth all of his life; that God's Word does not fail.

12 Wise is the man who knows this when he is young, because the faithfulness of God's Word is a two-edged sword. The blessings of God do not fail, because the word of God does not fail.

13 But it is also true that calamity comes upon the ones who will not honor God in their lives. This is also God's Word and it too does not fail.

14 Wise is the man who knows this when he is young.

App - some people have the thought that they want to play as long as they can in their lives and then just before they die they want to get things in order with God. You will have no delight in that decision.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them."

1 Know with all of your heart that not one word of God will fail.

Illus - when I come to the end of my life I'm sure there will be things of my life I will regret. But one thing I know, I will never regret trusting Christ.

1 Joshua is challenging the leaders of Israel to choose the life of blessing, to stay on course, to finish the fight, to run the race well.

2 There are so many promises that God wants you to have right now. But these are promises you can only obtain by trusting him in faith, by standing on the rock, and by believing in all of your heart that God's Word does not fail.

God promises:

1 life to the full

2 peace that passes understanding

3 he will give you the desires of your heart

4 that you will gain new strength and rise up on wings like eagles

5 you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you

6 he will surround you with songs of deliverance

7 he will make your feet like hind's feet

8 you are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus

9 ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened unto you

10 seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you

11 the prayers of the righteous man will be very effective.