

Resisting the Drift: Faithful Living in an Unfaithful World Joshua 23

INTRODUCTION

For this morning, I want to turn our attention to **Joshua 23**. When done well, there is something very powerful; very moving and very important about the last words spoken by an individual. **The Bible is full of some great examples of words like these;** final charges given to family and friends and even entire nations. As we come to the end of the book of Joshua, we find another example of “*final words*” but before we read them let me give you the setting. It’s been about 20-23 years since Caleb marched off to conquer the fortified cities of Hebron, and by now the conquest of the Promised Land is pretty much over but not complete. Joshua is no less than 100 years young. And knowing that he will soon pass from the scene, he gathers the leaders and the people together to give them his final charge.

He’s about to finish a long life of service to God’s people; forty years as Moses’ assistant, 25 years as his successor leading the people to conquer and settle in the promised land. So, his final words are precious, indeed, because they come from the perspective of someone who has hung in there for the long haul, someone who has decades of accumulated wisdom gleaned from faithfully, humbly following God.

Joshua might be 100 years old, but he’s not too old to preach! **Joshua is dying as he lived.** The concerns that have been Joshua’s burden all of his life are still the same concerns and burdens with which he departs from this life. There is something enormously striking about that isn’t there.

Before we begin to look at the details of the chapter, there’s something extraordinarily wonderful about Joshua. Here is a man who is concerned for the future of the people of God. He may be going the way of all flesh, but he’s not concerned about himself. **But he is concerned about God’s people, and he’s concerned about the future.** You know, that’s a

characteristic of men and women who are godly when they grow old: that they are still concerned about the future. A future they may never see. *A future they may never partake in, but the future of their children and the future of their grandchildren and the future of generations to come.* I find that enormously encouraging as we begin this chapter, that Joshua has a long-term view of things. Joshua is looking down the corridors of history, he’s looking down the generations to come, and he’s concerned about their spiritual well being. **Experienced believers are able to see what is required for the long haul, and what Joshua has to say here is not of the quick-fix mentality.** Joshua has in view here the long haul, what it takes to be a mature believer in the lord Jesus Christ for generations to come. And there are lessons to be learned in this chapter that are transferable to every age, including our own.

And so, I want to ask the question, “*What is it that lies on Joshua’s heart?*” Imagine that you are going to visit Joshua, 100 years old and you’re going to hear his final words, his closing thoughts, his motives and ambitions, and what are they? What are the great concerns of Joshua, the captain of the lord’s army that has led the people of God into the Promised Land? We’ve seen him in battle and now we see him as the land has been divided and the various tribes are about to go their various ways, and Joshua has one final parting word for them.

Here’s my main point for this morning: **we can resist the lure of the world (the drifting away from God-centered living) by grounding our lives in God’s faithfulness towards us, clinging to Him with faithful devotion and heeding the warning of the consequences of unfaithful rebellion.**

How can you and I...how can we resist the drift and enjoy faithful living in an unfaithful world?

I. Give God _____: ground yourself in the _____ of God (23:1-5)

Joshua began by reminding the leaders that they had been blessed by God. The record of God's saving acts forms the fundamental theology upon which all practical living is built. Just as the exodus provided the rationale for obedience to the Ten Commandments, the faithfulness of God in the conquest provided the impetus for godly living in the land.

Joshua was concerned that over the course of time the people would start to believe that they had gained the Promised Land through their honed military skills or their brilliant strategists. Joshua wanted them to remember that what they had, and who they were, were results of God's work in their lives. They needed Him.

It is easy for us to feel overmatched when we face what seems impossible situation. That's when we need to remember that we serve a God who specializes in impossible situations. It is easy to look at our extremely secular or pagan culture and think that it is beyond hope. However, as we look back on our history, we realize that there have been pagan cultures before, and they have been transformed by the power of the Gospel message. **Whenever God's people have dared to trust God fully, communities, countries and societies have been changed.** We must never forget that we serve a great God and we have been extended an unfathomable mercy. We must give Him credit for the past so that we will have a basis for trusting Him in the future.

II. Cling to the Lord with _____ devotion (23:6-11)

What does it mean to cling to God with faithful devotion?

A. Obey _____ (23:6)

B. Live a _____ life (23:7-10)

C. Love the Lord _____ (23:11)

III. Count the cost of _____ (23:12-16)

In other words, heed the warning of the consequences of unfaithful rebellion. Do you see what he's saying? God will always keep His word, and God's word is both positive and negative. Joshua was telling the people to count the cost. They needed to realize that there are consequences to their choices and their actions. If they chose to follow the Lord by esteeming Him, obeying Him, loving Him, and honoring Him by living lives that are different than that of the world around them; they would continue to know God's blessing. If they chose not to do those things, they would experience God's judgment.

Joshua repeatedly insists on the integrity and authority and infallibility and indestructibility of the Word of God. Obey the Word—results in victory and blessing! Disobey the Word—sorrow, misery, trial, defeat. Choose to sin, choose to suffer. Joshua warned them. About 800 years later due to the constant transgressions of the covenant, the worship of pagan gods, and the wholesale abandonment of the Law of Moses would result in first the destruction of the Northern tribes by Assyria (722 B.C.), and the Southern tribes by Babylon (c.605-586 B.C.).

CONCLUSION

So, let me ask: *Do you feel that God is far away and that nothing seems to be working the way it should be working? Do you lack His blessing in your life?* It could be that you have ignored Joshua's counsel.

- Is your heart _____?
- Are you taking a _____ approach to God's commands?
- Have you forgotten the _____ of God and started taking Him for _____?
- Is it _____ that you aren't even a part of God's _____ yet?