

Joshua Chapter 13

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[0 : 0 0] there's certain things that we just don't say to each other. Sometimes we learn that there's certain things that we don't say to each other when we've said something and we realise we shouldn't have.

I asked the mother of a crofter in the last month or two, so how many sheep has your son got? And she looked at me in horror and said, you should never ask a crofter that.

I said, I didn't know. She says, well, you know now. You should never ask a crofter or the mother of a crofter how many sheep that man has.

Apparently it's like asking a businessman how much money he has in his personal bank account. He would never do that. So I learned certain things you just don't do, you don't say.

You'd never ask a lady her age, would you? But if you happen to find out a lady's age and if the number was a big one, or even if you find out the number of a man in his advanced years, you would never say to that man or to that woman what the Lord said to Joshua in verse 1, would you?

[1 : 2 0] When Joshua was very old and well advanced in years, the Lord said to him, you are very old.

It's very stark, isn't it? And yet it speaks to us about the reality of passing time, and that's our first point this evening.

We see here the reality of passing time. Boys and girls, there's a few younger ones here tonight. It's good to see you.

Can you tell me what's this? Emily's. Was asleep before she arrived. But over this side there's a few.

Tell me what this is, boss. It's a timer. This is something that comes with some board games. It came with one of the board games that's in the cupboard in the house.

[2 : 2 1] I don't want to get your hopes up too high. I turned it over. This is not a sermon timer, unfortunately. But we will be done by 7. But this comes with some board games.

And there's elements, there's tasks within the games. And within that game, you turn the timer over, and the timer goes into that place of prominence, usually held and watched by the other team.

And as the task is being followed, as the names are being, or the charades are being worked out, or the pictures are being drawn, or whatever it is, you see the grains of sand, and they're trickling down from one of these compartments to the other.

And there's a constant awareness of time. And that's what the Lord does really here to Joshua, and to the nation of Israel as he addresses Joshua.

He speaks to him of the reality of passing time. You're very old, says the Lord to Joshua.

[3 : 3 1] The sands of time are sinking, and they've sunk quite low. Joshua is well advanced in years. He doesn't have many years left.

And the Lord speaks to him about that reality. And this is something that I think it's fair to say the world hates to talk about.

But it's a reality. We're not here forever. We may get many years on the scene of time like Joshua, who was, by the Lord's word, very old.

Or we may get only a few years on the scene of time like Jesus. But we have no continuing city here.

And it's striking even to think about the fact that since I wrote this, which I think was on Thursday, we've seen at least two more of our community going from time into eternity.

[4 : 48] We have no continuing city here. There is a reality that we have to come to terms with. Time is passing. James chapter 4, verse 13 and 14.

Now listen, you who say today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why?

You do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

One of the devil's sharpest tactics is to cause us to lose our awareness of passing time. Some of us tonight will be sitting here with that sense of invincibility.

You know, it's not actual fact, but we feel within ourselves like we're going to live forever. but we have no continuing city here.

[6 : 03] The devil likes us not to think about these things, but the Lord in his loving, corrective wisdom gives Joshua and gives us the reminder in the opening verse here of the reality of passing time.

That's the first point. The second point is to note here that the relay continues. We have some of the young ones here and some of the older ones will know what I'm talking about here as well.

But I know looking around that some are runners over there and elsewhere and there's one particular race and we know it, it's called the relay and there isn't one runner in the relay race.

There's various runners, there may be many runners in the relay race and each contestant, each runner on the track has a particular section of that track to cover.

So when one runner does his or her stretch, they cover the area, they're holding the baton, they come to the end of the area that's marked out for them, they pass on the baton and then the next runner in the relay starts to run.

[7 : 24] And that's a picture that we've seen already. If you go back to the beginning of the book of Joshua, we see as chapter 1 commences, even if we go back a chapter on from Joshua chapter 1 to Deuteronomy chapter 34, we've seen this already.

The book of Joshua opens just as the book of Deuteronomy closes with that picture. Moses has taken the children of Israel to the threshold of the promised land.

Moses has run the stretch that the Lord has marked out for him as he's led God's people. And then in Joshua chapter 1, the baton is handed to Joshua and Joshua takes over the next stretch.

and he begins with the Lord's strength and the Lord's courage to run. And now Joshua is very old and he has come almost to the end of his race.

But the Lord makes clear to him there's still more to do in the big picture. There is more land still to take.

[8 : 52] There's more of what I've promised you that you need to realise, that you need to inherit, that you need to grasp. And so we get that in verse 1 when Joshua was very old and well advanced in years.

The Lord said to him, you are very old and there is still very large areas of land to be taken over. And the point to make here is that the Christian race is a relay.

It's not a 100 meter sprint. It's not even something that just you or I are involved with. The Christian race is a relay and we need to understand that or we'll give up.

run for a stretch. Even though we may not be the one who actually crosses the line.

We run the stretch that's marked out for us. We're part of a team. We're passing the gospel baton from one person to the next person to the next person.

[10 : 04] We're links in a chain. Every link is important. one of the commentators says the mortality of his servants never handicaps the everlasting God.

And Moses, he comes into the scene and God gives him that stretch to run and he runs it. And Joshua comes onto the scene and he takes over where Moses has left off and he begins to run and he's still running.

as the Lord addresses him. Are you still running this evening? One of the most prolific runners in the UK that we've ever known in our history was Eric Liddell.

Chariots of Fire tells the story of his life. life. And Eric Liddell, he rose to fame with this astonishing Olympic success and he was known for being one who never compromised in the arena of faith.

He would not run on Sunday. No matter who pressurised him, no matter what sanctions almost came on him, he would not do it.

[11 : 23] and God honoured him for his obedience. Now Liddell, the first part of his life story is known well, the second part of his life story is not so well known. He left this country to go to China in 1925.

Now he left this country with the cheers of the masses. He'd known such incredible success in the area of athletics. So how would he fare in his service for the Lord as a missionary in China?

Was there huge success? Well, on the face of it, there wasn't. He suffered much. His health was in tatters.

He died young. He saw little fruit. But those who came after him saw fruit.

And they saw fruit in abundance. When Liddell was in China, there were very, very few Christians. Today, it's estimated that there is somewhere in the region of 70 million Christians in China.

[12 : 45] And that's a conservative estimate. little in the spiritual sense, although he wouldn't have seen it in his lifetime, Liddell in the spiritual sense was one runner in the relay of God's mission that still continues today.

Now, Paul spoke of this. He had a very clear picture of his calling. Paul. He says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 5, he says, the context for this chapter is that in that fellowship in Corinth, some people were saying, I like Paul.

Others were saying, I like a Paulus. They had their favorite preachers. They had their preferences which were dominating and causing fractures in the fellowship.

And Paul says, who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? But ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, says Paul, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

So neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor, for we are all laborers together with God.

[14 : 14] Paul understands that he is part of a really. He is a link in a chain. And we see in this juncture within the book of Joshua that the relay is continuing as God's work advances.

So there's the reality of passing time. There's the relay which continues. The third point here is we see the RV points that the Lord marks out.

Remember watching a documentary in the past about the SAS, about how they train. And these soldiers would, as part of their training, have to navigate through mountains and deserts using a compass and maps, and they'd have to find various RV stations, various RV points.

RV was short for rendezvous, which just means that pre-arranged place, that assembly place for troops. You could say in verses 2 to 5, the Lord, he gives Joshua the RV points.

He gives Joshua the details of the areas that they were to head to, the areas of land that were still to be taken. Look at verse 2, this is the land that remains.

[15 : 36] All the regions of the Philistines and the Geshurites from the Shihar River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north, all of it counted as Canaanite, and so on.

If you go down to verse 5, we see the Lord, he speaks to Joshua of these details, of these RV points, of these areas that he promised were theirs and they were to advance towards and enter into and take hold of.

The Lord gives Joshua these RV points, these details. So that Joshua and the people that Joshua was leading would trust him.

We might wonder, why these details? Why are they given these specifics? Why are they given these coordinates? Well, it's so that they would take God at his word and they would advance on the basis of God's promises, that they would not be fearful, that they would not be discouraged, that they would not be disheartened, that they would not doubt, but that they would be faithful and that they would in God's strength with God's help, advance knowing that God would give them the victory.

And in verses 6 and 7, the Lord gives that clear promise again that he keeps on repeating in the book of Joshua. He says in verse 6 and 7, as for the inhabitants of the mountain regions from Lebanon to Mishra forth Maine, that is all the Sidonians, I myself will drive them out before the Israelites and so on.

[17 : 25] And this is an illustration here of how God works and what the Lord calls us to. They were given a commission through Joshua.

We have been given a commission through Christ. our commission is not to go out with swords to take the land by force, but our commission is to go out with the sword of God's word.

Our commission is to go out in the power of the sword of the spirit. We're to go out with the gospel message. We're to go out and tell people the good news about Jesus.

Now, where do we go? Well, we don't have one small area on a map that we have to work within the confines of. We are to go out into all the world, but it's worth noting this evening that God has put you here in the house and on the street or in the area in the township that you live, and he has put me in the position that I'm in so that I and you together will go out with the gospel message.

Jesus said, the harvest is plentiful. The fields are white. The workers are few. Go, said Jesus.

[18 : 44] I am sending you. And when we go in obedience to God's word and the power of the Holy Spirit, sometimes God uses us and he shows us how he uses us in the way that he did Joshua and Israel to take the land, to take souls to Christ.

Christ and sometimes God himself, apart from us, not using anyone, drives out the enemy and brings people to himself.

himself. You know, there are likely people in North Harris today, whom no Christian has spoken to in months, perhaps in years, and yet God has taken hold of them, and God is working in their hearts, and God himself is seeking in order to save.

So the encouragement for us tonight is to be a Christian soldier as we sang. One who will carry the gospel into the classrooms, into the playground, into the office, the warehouse, into the hospital wards, to the harbour.

Our calling is to go where the Lord sends, and to speak what the Lord says. And you might say, well, I'm very old, and perhaps you are.

[20 : 47] So was Joshua, but God was still using them. And you might say, well, I'm not very strong. And perhaps you're not.

And neither was Israel. Small, insignificant country in the grand scheme of things. God was still using them. You might say this evening, I'm not very faithful.

I'm not good enough. And neither was Israel. They were repeatedly unfaithful to God, but he was still using them to work out his purposes.

So be encouraged tonight. God can use you and God will use you to reach souls if you will make yourself available to him and trust him.

Two more points, no more time. The reality of passing time is something that I come to terms with myself even in the sermon now.

[22 : 12] The reality of passing time, let's remember how short we are in this world for. The relay continues, so let's ensure that we are running.

And the RV points that the Lord marks out, the commission that he gives, let's ensure that we are listening to Jesus and that we are going out if we are his people to share with others the good news that he has impressed upon us and that we have taken hold of by faith.

We'll pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that as we look at this passage where there is much detail, there is much that we may find dry and yet Lord, you speak into our lives as we even isolate one or two verses within it.

We ask Lord that you would help us to be wise, not just to be hearers but to be doers of the word. Help us Lord as we go out from here this evening, not to be distracted and not to default to the position where we are consumed by everything that is happening around us in this world and we lose sight of the reality of the fact the time is passing.

Help us we pray to redeem the time that you allow us to have and to use that time to come to know you if we have never yet come to know you.

[23 : 49] We pray for any here tonight who are not yet Christians and once more they sit here and once more there is the opportunity to come to Jesus and Lord we pray that each one whose ears are open, each one whose eyes you have enabled to see, Lord that they would come to Jesus and receive the salvation, the peace that he offers.

Lord for those of us who know you and who are trusting you, help us we pray to run and not to give up, not to slow down, not to stop, but help us we pray, even sometimes when we can't see the course that we're running, even when we have no clarity on the track that you've put ahead of us, help us as Joshua did, as Moses did, to run, to put our all into living for you and serving you, and help us we pray Lord not to be those who are out of fear, out of a culture that is increasingly hostile to the gospel, help us not to become fearful, but to go out with the courage that your people did of old, to go out as Christian soldiers, not to make war, but to tell the world about Jesus who was the Prince of

Peace. Hear our prayers and help us, we ask, because we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.