

Joshua's Farewell to the Leaders

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Date: 17 March 2019

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] There's a church.

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[35 : 27] draw a sword for the Lord's cause. He's still full of zeal and so is Joshua. I think we can be thankful here for many like that.

Certainly I'm thankful in the congregation here as I look around. And we see men and we see women who are well advanced in years.

I'm sure they wouldn't mind me saying that. But they're still following the Lord closely. They're still spiritually alert and bright.

They're still keeping on. And we can be encouraged through them. And those who I'm speaking of can be encouraged in these years to keep on keeping on because the devil never stops having a go at us.

We have to keep on going to the end. So there's Joshua in his retirement in his climactic years and he's still keeping on keeping on.

[36 : 38] In verses 2 and 3 we hear him as he summons all the chiefs and they listen and they respond.

when Joshua summons all Israel their elders leaders judges and officials they don't hear the message and say well do we really have to go to this meeting?

What does old Joshua know? He's an old man now. we're the people who are sharp we're the people who have the power and the strength.

No, when Joshua speaks they drop everything. They listen. They give him respect. respect. And that's a practical point in application as well.

In an age where respect is lacking in an age where we tend to listen to youth much more than we listen to experience let's not be led by the culture let's be led by God's word.

[37 : 47] remember to respect to honour those who are our elders as they keep on pointing us to the Lord as Joshua was.

So there's retirement but it's not an inactive ineffective retirement it's a very active it's a very effective retirement Joshua is still full of life spiritually. Second point here is reassurance.

As he speaks to Israel he gives them reassurance. Look at verse 4. Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain the nations.

I conquered between the Jordan and the great sea in the west. The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you and you will take possession of their land as the Lord your God promised you.

He gives them reassurance. He summons them and as they're gathered and as they listen Joshua he spurs them on but he gives them reassurance in doing so.

[39 : 05] One of the things that we tend to do more as we get on in years is we look back. I'm starting to hear myself doing it.

You look back and you think about some of the old days. You share memories. You share experiences. You drive through skies. Mary and I did a few weeks ago. My mind goes back 30-40 years almost now.

And we do that as the years go on. We look back but we also look forward because we want those whom we love who are around us and who will likely outlive us.

We want them to live well. And after we're gone we want them to persevere and to stay on the track. And that's Joshua's desire.

He wants God's people to keep on the highway. He knows that he's going the way of the earth. He knows he's coming to the end of his life. He sees these people that he's loved and he's served and he wants them to keep on keeping on as he wants.

[40 : 16] Wearsby the commentator writes this at the end of a long and full life. Joshua's greatest concern wasn't himself. His greatest concern was his people and their relationship with God.

He didn't want to leave until he had challenged them one more time to love the Lord and to keep his commandments. And that's what he's doing here.

He's desperate that they will not neglect the relationship with God. He's so full of zeal that they will not drift into disobedience.

he wants them to stay on the highway. He wants after he has reached the destination of heaven to know that they are still on the road.

And so he encourages them in that and he assures them of God's help as long as they continue on that path. He reminds them in verse four of how God helped them in the past.

[41 : 26] He looks back and he says remember all that God has done for us. Don't forget that. And having looked back and said remember he reassures them that the promises that God gave to them in the past the promises that they held on to in the past were still promises that were good for the future.

So he says take hold of them as you're going forward. Dale Ralph Davis says such is of course the plain logic of faith.

Here is the consistent biblical pattern. Israel's confidence and assurance springs from remembering God's faithful words and deeds in the past.

So that's what we find Joshua doing in this speech. He's saying remember Jericho. Remember what God did for us. Remember the Jordan how impossible it was to pass and how God took us over without even getting our socks swept.

Remember these things he says. Remember all these unlikely victories when it looked like the giants in front of us were absolutely undefeatable and how God took us through it all.

[42 : 53] And then he reassures them that the God who was with them who was with Joshua would be with them once Joshua was gone. As they looked back in thankfulness they were able to look forward with hope.

we sat at the Lord's table last weekend. What do we do there? We look back don't we?

We look back and we remember all that the Lord has done for us. His body broken for us.

His blood shed for us. through which we are rescued. Through which we are saved. We look back to that event. We look back to remember the Lord's death.

But the table is a place where also we're called to look forward because each time we do it we're reminded of the fact that we do it only until he comes. So we're looking forward to his coming.

[44 : 04] God as we look these ways as we remember God's work as we remember his promises we're given the assurance for the future.

We sang about that God sent his son they called him Jesus he came to love heal and forgive he lived and died to buy my pardon an empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives.

What are we doing as we sing that? We're looking back but then having looked back and seen the faithfulness of God we can then look forward and we can sing because he lives I can face tomorrow because he lives all fear is gone because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives.

It's a hymn of great reassurance as we look to the future and maybe there's somebody here tonight and they need that reassurance. Maybe some of us find that at half past two and three in the morning we're still awake in our beds we have worries that are keeping us up.

Now where are our worries usually located? They're in the future. We need not worry about the future says Joshua we're trusting in God remember the God who promised to be with Moses the God who promised to be with Joshua us is the God who promises that he will never leave us but he will be with us always to the end of the age.

[46 : 06] So there's Joshua's retirement and then there is this reassurance that comes through Joshua's speech. The third thing we see here again in the words that Joshua shares with these people is there's an emphasis on repentance.

Joshua teaches them about that need to constantly be repenting. What is repentance? For the boys and girls who are here when you hear the word repentance repentance is a big word but it simply means to turn around.

You might be walking one direction but if you repent you stop and you turn around and you change direction. repent and we repent when we first hear the call of Jesus who calls us to turn away from sin and turn to him in faith.

The second that we believe, the second that we become Christians is when we repent but then once we've repented it's not a one-off act it's something that we do day by day by day by day every day we are in time we are constantly hearing the call of Jesus to keep turning away from sin and to keep following him.

Martin Luther, I've given you this quote before, says when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said repent he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.

[47 : 40] All of the Christian life is repentance, turning from sin and trusting in the good news that Jesus saves sinners aren't merely a one-time inaugural experience but the daily substance of Christianity.

The gospel is for every day and every moment. Repentance is to be the Christian's continual posture. And that's what Joshua is reminding them of here.

They need to keep turning from sin. They need to keep on turning constantly to God.

From Joshua chapter 1 there's the reassurance in the promises that God gives that he will never leave us and he will never forsake us.

But the reality is if we're honest we are people who are prone to leave him and to forsake him. and as he shows us that we're called to repent of that and to turn back to him.

[48 : 56] So that's what Joshua is pressing on them here. Verse 6 be very strong. Be careful to obey all that is written in the book of the law of Moses without turning aside to the right or to the left.

Do not associate with these nations that remain among you. Do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them but you are to hold fast to the Lord your God as you have until now.

The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations. To this day no one has been able to withstand you. One of you writes a thousand because the Lord your God fights for you just as he promised.

So be very careful to love the Lord your God but if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you.

Instead they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs, thorns in your eyes until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.

[50 : 07] Now this is not a speech which is concerned about nations not mixing with other nations because of skin colour and culture.

This is about the gods of foreign nations that were being forced into the experience of God's people.

There is only one true God and he was speaking to them. Who Joshua? And he was saying keep turning to me.

Keep listening to me. Keep living as I call you to. keep obeying me. Verse six. Why? Well he's saying to Joshua because I love you.

Because I made you and I made you for myself and I know what's best for you. So the Lord is saying to Joshua don't turn to the right or to the left. Verse six. Don't be led astray by other nations with their fake gods.

[51 : 13] Verse seven. Don't wander from me. But hold fast to me. Verse eight. Remember how I've looked after you in the past says the Lord.

Verses nine to eleven. Stick with me. And I'll look after you and I'll bless you in the future. So verses twelve and thirteen the Lord says to Joshua if you turn away from me you can be sure you're going to be into all kinds of trouble.

That was God's word to them through Joshua and that remains God's word to us through Joshua. And if we're scratching our heads thinking well how does this relate to us?

Well it's not so much about foreign nations. The gospel is for all nations. In heaven there will be every tongue, every tribe. But Joshua speaks about idols.

We still struggle with idols don't we? We still struggle with things and pursuits and people and relationships and commitments that draw us away from God and the centre of his will and cause us to veer off to the left and veer off to the right.

[52 : 44] So there's a word for us here about not having idols but allowing them to take hold of us. And there's a word for you and I here about obedience because we still struggle every day.

that if we want to walk with the Lord, if we want to know his blessing, that the message to this speech is we are to keep repentant.

Every day, every hour, a continual posture is to be one of repentance where we are turning away from idols, we are turning away from sin and we are turning constantly in obedience back to the God who loves us and his word we can trust.

Two more points but no more time. Let's pray. Our heavenly father, we thank you for this passage and we thank you for Joshua, your servant.

We thank you that he is a character that we can look at in history. We thank you that he is one whom you took hold of and whom you commissioned to lead your people into the promised land and we thank you that as you equipped him he was unable to do that.

[54 : 23] We thank you that he did that through the years of his life, the years when he was strong and young and the years when he was old and coming towards the end of life.

We thank you that he is still here in this passage. So much a man who is filled with zeal and determination and commitment to follow the Lord.

we ask that you would help us even as we see his example to follow it. We ask Lord that you would help us day by day to be repenting of the sin that grieves you.

We pray that day by day we would be casting the idols that we are allowed to commit to our lives off the throne in order Lord that you would have full reign over us.

So help us Lord we pray as we look to this passage. Help us we pray to take hold of these promises which are still good which are still for us.

[55 : 39] And help us we pray to look to Jesus. To trust him. And to follow him.

we thank you that he went to a cross to pay the price for our waywardness. We thank you that he lived that perfect life of obedience that none of us could live.

We thank you that he did everything to make it possible for us to enter into the promised land that he has prepared for all who love and who trust him.

So enable us we pray to trust the Lord Jesus. Enable us we pray to day by day show our love for the Lord Jesus by seeking to live in a way that pleases him.

We ask Lord that you would sanctify us that you would make us more and more like Christ and Lord that you would use us to bring glory to your name. And we ask all these things in Jesus name.

[56 : 47] Amen. We'll sing to conclude Mission Praise 1164 1164 Come O find of every blessing tune my heart to sing your grace.

streams of mercy never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise.

Songs of God's abundant treasure sung by angels chums above songs that tell the boundless measure of my Lord's unchanging love.

I remember God's great mercy by his help I safely come and I know he will not fail me but will surely bring me home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering far away from God and to rescue me from danger shed for me his precious blood.

[58 : 32] You God's grace I am his debtor daily eyes this thought renew let that grace like a fetter find my wandering heart to you prone to wander Lord I feel it prone to lead the God I love take my heart oh take and steal it steal it from your corpse love and I may that grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore Amen