

The Lord gave land, rest, protection, victory and His word

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Date: 17 February 2019

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[0 : 00] morning in him and your son. If you could turn with me now please to Joshua chapter 21.

Let's pray as we go there. Lord we thank you for your word, we thank you for the passage that we've read, for the details of the names and the places which remind us of the fact that we're talking about real places in real history.

We thank you that we can go back and we can check the historicity of these places and the time and the architecture but the archaeology and the different findings over the ages testify to the fact that your word is true. And we ask Lord that you would give us confidence always in your word even though it comes under such attack in our day and in this country at this time. We pray Lord that you would help us as you spoke to Joshua, help us not to be fearful, not to be afraid.

But to have that courage of knowing that you are with us and the word before us is inspired by the Holy Spirit that's the word of God. So help us Lord we pray we ask that the Holy Spirit to inspire this may be our teacher and the one who guides us as we would seek to meditate upon these verses tonight and we ask Lord that you would speak to our souls, speak to our hearts as we come before you.

We ask all this in Jesus name. Amen. One of the things that I often tend to do when I'm looking at a passage in preparation especially in the early stages of preparation is to look for the verbs.

[2 : 16] It can be a helpful thing to do when you're looking at a passage and you're just trying to understand the passage and trying to follow the thrust of it. It's often helpful to look at the verbs, look at the doing words as you're told in school because often that unlocks the central message within the passage and tonight what I'd like us to do is really look at three verses here as our text.

We've read the whole chapter but the three verses that I want to take as our text really are the summary statement of the book so far.

This is the a juncture at which Joshua pauses and he reflects on where they are and where they've been taken as God's people.

And so I'd like to look at that summary statement of what Dale Ralph Davis one of the commentators describes in these verses describes these verses as the jugular vein of the whole book.

Verse 43 to verse 45 says So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers and they took possession of it and settled there.

[3 : 35] The Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their forefathers not one of their enemies withstood them. The Lord handed all their enemies over to them.

Not one of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed. Everyone was fulfilled. Think about the doing words there in these short verses.

Think about the doing words and think about who it is that's doing everything here. It's the Lord. verse 43 so the Lord gave.

It's the Lord who gave it. Verse 44 again we have the repetition so we'll note it the Lord gave. Verse 44 again the Lord handed.

You know this is something where we look at the activity within the verses what we see is it's the Lord that's doing it all. And so right from the beginning here we see that we have a message of grace.

[4 : 45] It's a message of what the Lord has done for his people. And yes they've been involved and we've read through this book and we've seen the way in which God had involved his people.

Sometimes he'd used them in the doing. But all that they had and all that they were now enjoying the Lord gave to them graciously.

The Lord handed over to them. Tomorrow it's Lois' birthday. It's going to be seven.

It's going to be eight, sorry. I knew that. I was just testing to see if she was listening. Maybe she'll get some presents.

Maybe. Maybe she'll get some cake. But what she gets and what anybody gets on their birthday it's a gift.

[5 : 50] They're not asked to pay for it or work for it. I won't say to her tomorrow morning, right, you're not going to get one thing until ten buckets of coal have been delivered in here.

You know, on a birthday what you get is a gift. And what Joshua notes here is that all that God's people were now in receipt of was a gift from God.

and that's the message of the gospel. The forgiveness of sin that we need. The peace that our souls thirst for, the joy that our hearts long for, the grace that we need in order to be saved.

we don't buy it. We don't earn it. We can't. It's a gift. We simply have to receive it by faith.

Ephesians 2, we know these verses so well, but it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And that's not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

[7 : 07] So what then did the Lord give to his people in these verses? The first point to note here is the Lord gave them land.

And it was a promised land. A land that was promised to their forefathers. Long since had this land been promised. It was a land that was described in that rich imagery in chapter 5, verse 6, a land flowing with milk and honey.

It was a land that was full of blessing. It was a land that was everything that they longed for. It was just for them. It was perfect for them. God's people.

So the Lord, verse 33, gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. And we have the details of that land.

We have the names that I was struggling to pronounce on the lots. And we have all these geographical areas that we can go back through the previous chapters and see all these names and these areas and these clans.

[8 : 20] We have the detail, painstaking detail, people. But this is the summary. The Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there.

The Lord gave land. And that's a reminder of what God still does for his people. Yes, he did this in times past. Yes, this is an episode that's locked in history, but this is something that was to point forward to what Jesus would promise when he came.

And Jesus has now promised. John 14, Jesus said, do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you, a land. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

Jesus is preparing a place, a land, Emmanuel's land that we sang of, a new heavens and a new earth that is for his people.

[9 : 47] But just as Israel had to take possession of the land that the Lord prepared for them, they had to enter it. We too need to take possession of this land that Jesus offers to us.

We need to make our way into this place that Jesus has gone on to. John 14 still, Jesus says, you know the way to the place where I'm going.

And Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Crucial words in scripture, that's why we go back to them so often because we live in a name that confesses it so repeatedly. But the truth of scripture is that if we want to be sure of a place in heaven, if we want to be sure that we will avoid eternity in hell, then we need to come to and we need to come through Jesus.

He is the way. And so we put our faith in him, we take hold of this gift that he offers to us. The Lord gave land.

[11 : 11] Second point, the Lord gave rest. Verse 44, the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers.

And just note there the nature and the fullness of the rest that the Lord gave to his people.

It was full rest. It was rest on every side. It wasn't a partial rest. It wasn't a measure of rest, but he gave them rest on every side.

We've had so many episodes so far in this book where God's people seem to be surrounded on all four sides by enemies. And everywhere they turn, there's danger and there's risk.

And yet at this point, Joshua says the Lord gave them rest on every side. And it's only the Lord that could give them that.

[12 : 12] They weren't a numerous nation. They weren't a large, powerful nation. They didn't have the horses and chariots that other nations that came against them had.

They didn't have the military capabilities that many of the other more powerful nations in the eyes of the world had. They were very small by comparison. They were vulnerable. But here in Joshua 21, they have rest from their enemies.

And Joshua recognises that that rest was given to them by the Lord. The Lord gave them rest. One of the things that I remember from last weekend, I can't remember what point last weekend David Robertson shared this, but he spoke at one point in the weekend about statistics that had just come out.

And it indicated that children in the UK were the most unhappy, most restless children in the world.

And I didn't see the statistic. I'm not sure where he got it from. But that's what he said. Children in the UK are the most unhappy, restless children in the world.

[13 : 34] Now, how can that be, you might ask, when children today have more stuff, more toys, more slime, more books, more games, more gadgets than ever before?

We might ask. But as you think back to your childhood, some of you, and you had nothing. Nothing. Well, the reason that that statistic is that statistic, it's because we don't get rest and satisfaction and joy from our stuff.

No matter how much stuff the children get and we get, it doesn't bring us rest. Augustine, who I quoted this morning, I'll quote him again, as I often do in this quote, says, our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee.

We sang this morning, I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Jesus says in Matthew 11, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke from you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble and hard and you will find rest for your souls. The Lord gave land, he gave it to them.

[15 : 10] The Lord gave them rest. The third thing here is the Lord gave them protection. Again, we're here in verse 44.

Not one of their enemies withstood them. The Lord handed all their enemies over to them. Now, did that mean that Israel, God's people, lived happily ever after and there was no trouble ever and there was no conflict?

Did that mean that the rest of the historical account of God's people in the Old Testament is going to be nothing but peace and joy and harmony?

No, it doesn't. Still, there would be conflict. Still, there would be dangers, toils, and snares, as we'll sing at the end. Lots of them.

things. But in these dangers, toils, and snares, in the midst of that trouble, the Lord gave him protection.

[16 : 22] He used to be a minister in the Church of Scotland and Inverness, the West Church, Inns' Church, Alistair Malcolm, and he would often say, it's not just that we need light at the end of the tunnel, we need light in the tunnel.

Talking about trials and struggles, it's not just that we need to see there's light at the end of the tunnel, he says, as God's people, we need that light in the tunnel. And that's the kind of light that God gives.

Light in the dark tunnels of trouble in this life. It's the kind of protection that he affords us, not protection from trouble, but protection in trouble.

Protection when we come under attack. 2 Corinthians 1, Paul the Apostle says, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in our troubles.

See, there's comfort that God promises and there's protection that God promises in our troubles. Those of us who've gone through troubles and we all have to varying degrees, we've known probably much more of the blessing of God's protection in the midst of that than we ever feel when life was going smoothly.

[17 : 55] Isaiah 43, this is what the Lord says, He who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have summoned you by name, you are mine.

when you pass through the waters, I will be with you. He doesn't say you won't pass through the waters, he says when you pass through the waters of difficulty and sickness and breakdown and trouble, when you pass through these deep waters in life, I will be with you.

And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. Yes, we'll feel the currents, yes, we'll feel like we're starting to lose our foothold, but they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, the flames will not set you ablaze, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

Jesus said in John 16, in this world, you will have trouble, but take heart, I will overcome the world. And that leads us to the fourth point, the Lord gave victory.

[19 : 16] The Lord handed over all their enemies to them, still verse 44. chapter 8, chapter 8, chapter 8, chapter 6, and we see that amazing, supernatural victory that God gave his people in Jericho.

victory over the people, sin was dealt with within that camp, gave them victory in Ai. We could go to chapter 10 and read about the victory that the Lord gave them in the southern cities.

We could go to chapter 11 and read about how God gave them victory over the northern kings. And we can look back tonight and we can see all of the victories that God gave his people back there and then.

We can see and rejoice in the victories that Joshua was able to record and share with us because it's the same God remember.

This is our God as he was working for his people. But we can look even more fully at God's victory and not simply look back to Jericho and the Jordan and Ai and these places.

[20 : 56] We can look back to the ultimate battle. We can look to the ultimate victory that Jesus won for us on the cross.

Paul in Colossians 2 15 speaks of how Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities. He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them on the cross.

the Lord gave victory. We see it back then.

So you look to these places recorded in Joshua, we see it at Calvary. Have I said it before? Yes. Will I say it again? A million times? Yes.

we need to keep being reminded of this every day and every week. We never can drift too far from the cross.

[22 : 02] We must daily return to the cross where we see that the Lord gave victory to his people. I have overcome the world, says Jesus.

And he did. He overcame the world, he overcame the flesh, he overcame the devil, he overcame sin, he overcame Satan, he overcame death.

He was, he is victorious and the amazing thing is that he offers to share that victory with us. When we win a small victory, when we win some kind of small victory, some small sports contest or title, we can be so protective of that title.

You see boxers on the television up on the press box swaggering and swearing and, you know, they've got the belt, they've gone 12 rounds and knocked something out maybe in six rounds and they've got the belt, heavyweight champion of the world, got the belt, not sharing it with anybody.

This is mine, nobody's ever taken it off me. So they challenge people to come, but you're never taking it, the victory is mine. It's the way of the world.

[23 : 35] Christ's victory. He lost to share it. And he promises to share it with his people.

The greatest fruit of his victory is seen in the resurrection. He died but he rose. He died for our sin, he rose for our justification and he promises that all who trust in him, they will share in that victory, in that resurrection life.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 says, Quero death is your victory. Quero death is your sting. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. the Lord gave them land, that promised land.

The Lord gave them rest in all four sides. He gave them rest from their enemies. The Lord gave them protection in the struggles and the trials of life.

[24 : 56] The Lord gave them victory and finally the Lord gave them his word. And not just finally, but before everything.

This is the first point, it's also the final point. This is the start point of Joshua. And this is where Joshua will end up. The Lord gave them his word.

Not one, verse 45, of all the Lord's good promises to the house of Israel failed. Everyone was fulfilled. And that's the force behind all of this.

God spoke. He made promises on day one, chapter one. He gave his word and it happened.

Didn't happen instantly, but everything that he promised in his time, it happened. every one of God's good promises was fulfilled.

[26 : 10] Not one of them was broken, not one failed. And that's the way God worked, and that's the way God has always worked. When we even go back to the very beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter one, creation, how did creation happen?

How did everything that we see around us in such glory and majesty here that we talked about this morning, how did it happen? God spoke it.

He gave out his word and it happened. Genesis one, verse three, and God said, let there be light, and it was light. Verse six, and God said, let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water, and so it was made.

Verse nine, and God said, let the water under the sky gather to one place, and let dry ground appear, and it was so. Verse eleven, and God said, let the land produce vegetation, seed bearing plants and trees, and it was so.

Verse fourteen, and God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the sky, happened. Verse twenty, and God said, let the waters team with living creatures, and it all happened.

[27 : 36] Now, this is how God works. It's how creation worked, God spoke, and it happened. That's how salvation works. God spoke before the beginning of creation even.

Going back into the Trinity before time, we can go into Ephesians and see that. God spoke within the Trinity, he made a promise. He gave his word.

He gave his son. The word made flesh and through him and all that he has done salvation was secured.

So what do we have to do? What do we have to do? Believe. The Lord gave his word.

What do we have to do? Believe. believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 16 31 and you shall be saved.

[28 : 50] That was God's word to Joshua. That was God's word to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 31 21. And that's God's word to us tonight as we finish.

If we want to know the assurance of a place in Emmanuel's land. If we want to know rest for our souls.

If we want to know the Lord's protection in the danger, toils and snares of this life. If we want to know that victory over sin and Satan and death and hell.

Then we're to take God at his word and receive that grace that he offers to us in Christ.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Can we sing that?

[29 : 54] As we close. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for God's riches at Christ's expense. The forgiveness of sin, rest for our souls, protection in this world and protection that is ultimate and eternal from the enemy of our souls.

We thank you Lord for the promise of victory. All these riches, God's riches at Christ's expense. We thank you that we did not have to try to earn it.

We did not have to try to buy it. We have nothing in our hands to bring. We have nothing that we can do to persuade a holy God to receive us as sinners.

but we thank you that the word made flesh, Christ, came into this world and he has done everything to make it possible for us to receive the grace that he has purchased with his blood.

[31 : 05] Help us, we pray, to see it and help us, we pray, to believe, to take hold of the promises of God by the faith that you give to us.

And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing these words to conclude. Mission praise 31, amazing grace that