SONGS: I am Resolved; O Happy Day; For I know Whom I Have Believed (I know not why God's wondrous grace); When Morning Gilds the Skies
CLOSE:

Maintenance of the Victory

Joshua Series: 17 of 18

TEXT: Joshua 23 – Don't read
AIM: To present the necessity of our responsibility to be faithful to God in the absence of great leadership.

INTRODUCTION:

READ >> Vs. 1

A. Some 10 or 20-yrs. have passed since Israel has entered the Promised Land that God had given them and since Joshua had distributed it to the nation.

1. Joshua is now old – the oldest of two men in Israel.
   a. ALL the members of the nation that failed to enter the Promised Land when they were at Kadesh-barnea, and ALL those who were 20 years old and older perished in the wilderness EXCEPT Joshua and Caleb.
   b. **These <u>two men</u>** were faithful spies who brought back a good report from the land of Canaan.
2. Joshua gathered the tribes and summoned all of Israel's leaders in ***23:2*** **<< READ.**
   - I can't say for sure, but this meeting was probably at Shiloh where the tabernacle was located.
   - It was a solemn meeting and no doubt Caleb was there, along with Eleazer the priest, and the soldiers of the conquest who had given their swords a rest and now took up ploughshares, their positions as heads of families, elders and judges.
3. As their military leader, Joshua delivers here the <u>FIRST of two farewell challenges</u> to the representatives of Israel—the leaders. The second address was to all the people, which starts in **24:1.**
4. I doubt that in their response to Joshua's call that day they had little knowledge they would be hearing the LAST words of their great chief.

B. The old veteran spoke on* ONE THEME—*God's unfailing faithfulness to Israel and THEIR responsibility to be faithful to Him!

1. **<u>Three times</u>** Joshua repeated his central message **– READ >> vs. 3-8, 9-12, 13-16.**
2. **<u>Twice</u>**, Joshua being fearful they would not hear and heed, he emphasized the faithfulness of God and their responsibility to Him and warned of the consequences of their failure.
   - These last words of Joshua just before his death represent the re-establishment of the Old Covenant – but this time, **IN** the Promised Land.
   - If you think forward in the Bible, the last words of Jesus just before His death represent the establishment of the NEW Covenant – **IN** the New Life that was in His blood. It is **IN** that new life that we can begin to discover the full measure of that relationship between God and men!

If that crowd of Israelites was typical of people who were called to an unannounced meeting unexpectedly, they would be gripping and complaining that they had to go to another meeting and not very convinced that Joshua would have anything pertinent to say to anyone of them!

But Joshua, knowing his time was short, was concerned that after his death the victory so courageously fought, would be lost even though God had given the nation the land under his leadership.

- He feared there would be a turning back and a disregard for those spiritual principles that God said were essential in possessing the land.
- He was afraid they wouldn't get a full hold on that land and fully possess it.
- His appeal was to remind them of God's faithfulness and encourages them to keep the Law (vs. 3-7).
- He exhorts them to cleave to God (vs. 8-11) and warns them of God's judgement if they should forsake the Lord for other gods (vs. 12-16).

In this final message to the nation's leaders, Joshua seizes his final opportunity to challenge the hearts of those people NOT to quit, NOT to turn back, and NOT to give up one inch of land they had gained.

If Joshua were to speak to us today, that would be his message to us!

We are NOT to quit, NOT to turn back or give up a smidgen of the victory that we have won in Christ Jesus. As Joshua warned Israel—I trust that you and I would be warned also not to give up <u>any</u> of the victories that you have won.

C. Three things to notice in this chapter:

1. **Vs. 1-5** – Joshua REVIEWS their POSITION.
2. **Vs. 6-11** – Joshua RE-ESTABLISHES the PRINCIPLES.
3. **Vs. 12-16** – Joshua REMINDS them of the PENALTY if they do turn back.

To help them not to turn back BUT to go on for the Lord…

I. JOSHUA REVIEWS ISRAEL'S POSITION – VS. 1-5.

A. He REVIEWS what they had seen – vs. 3.

1. We need to be reminded sometimes of what **<u>WE</u>** have seen accomplished in our lives!
   a. We have seen God's answer to prayer.
   b. We have seen God fight and intervention for He gave us the victory. **TURN >> Ps. 44:1-3.**
   c. With 20/20 hindsight – how foolish it is when we turn back!
2. Joshua reminds them that God had kept His every promise and will **<u>YET</u>** keep every promise! He is a God that *"cannot lie"* (Titus 1:2).

B. He REVIEWS the danger they are facing.

1. They were still in the midst of the Enemy who was all around them **>> SEE Vs. 1, 3-4, 7, 12-13.** Oh, how true that is of God's children today.
   a. Unfortunately, Israel had become accustomed to having the enemy *"round about"* them.
   b. God had told them to drive them from the land, but the bad guys are still **<u>THERE</u>** – still there living with them and have been doing so for years, buying groceries at the same store, walking down the same streets, drinking from the same wells and playing with their children.

c. Israel had begun to accept the enemy's presence – maybe the Jewish children are starting to dress like, talk like, pick the customs and act like little Canaanite kids! They weren't distinctively different!

d. You and I dwell in the midst of a hostile enemy. God has explicitly told us ***– "wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate"*** (Cor. 6:17).

e. There was a time when Israel had declared war on the Canaanites – now their swords are sheathed and they have taken up the PC policy of tolerations of the "live and let live" philosophy.

f. If you are saved and have experienced the "new life" in Christ then there was a time when you declared war on the Canaanites in your life!

1) **Declared** war on the bad habits of your life
2) **Declared** war on improper and immodest dress standards
3) **Declared** war on the things you'd permit in your home, whether things, people or even what came in via the TV, radio and computer.
4) **Declared** war on the places you would go and the things you did for entertainment.
5) **BUT NOW! NOW** they have become commonplace – you've decided that you can't lick them so you've decided to learn to live with them.

2. Joshua was soon to pass off the SCENE.

a. He was afraid there would be a decline in the nation's separation, spirituality and steadfastness because of the lack of a strong leader.

b. History records for us that unfortunately; no man emerges from Israel that can take the helm of leadership for the nation!

c. This is what leads us into the book of Judges and that book closes with this statement *"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 21:25).

d. Maybe some were glad that Joshua was soon to go.

1) With him gone, they wouldn't have to listen to that old fogy telling them what to do any more.
2) Soon they would be out from under accountability with no more restrictions and then they could do their own thing, which they did not realise at the time, they would also pay a server price.

In his address to the leaders, Joshua reviewed Israel's position as to how they got to where they were and where they were headed. He addressed a second point to help them not to turn back was to…

II. JOSHUA RE-ESTABLISHES THE PRINCIPLES FOR VICTORY – VS. 6-10

A. Vs. 6 – The 1st principle was COURAGE & OBEDIENCE – cp. 1:7-9.

1. With Joshua's departure, the leaders would need to develop their own relationship with God, the ONE who was their SAVIOUR and SUSTAINER. ***So do each of us!***

2. Like Israel you and I have seen what God has done for us in the past.

a. **Vs. 3 –** God says to Israel, I have *"fought for you"* – in bringing them out of Egypt and into the land.

b. **Vs. 4 –** *"I have cut off"* the nations dividing their land among you.

3. God will continue His plan for victorious living with you and with me. **Therefore, <u>we need courage to do 3 things</u>:**

a. **1st – We need to be very COURAGEOUS to do right & be not ashamed of living what this Book says! Vs. 6 –***"keep and do all that is written in the book…turn not aside there from to the right hand or to the left."* **We are not to pick and choose what we will obey and what we won't out of it!**
   1) **Ps. 119:80 –** *"Let my heart be sound in thy statures; that I be not ashamed."*
   2) **Rom. 1:16 –** *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation…"*
   3) **Rom. 10:11 –** *"For the scripture saith, 'Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.'"*
   4) **1 Pet. 4:16 –** *"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."*
   5) **Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:8, 12 –** *"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; … For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."*

b. **2nd –** We are to have COURAGE to do right and obey God AND this **would involve COURAGE to *"Come not among these nations"* – Vs. 7.**
   1) This DOES NOT mean we are to become hermits and start isolated compounds, BUT it does mean we are to practice separation from erroneous and false religions, ungodliness, and worldliness.

      In **John 17:14-16** Jesus prayed on the behalf of believers to the heavenly Father saying, *"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*
   2) The apostle Paul wrote in **1 Cor. 5:9-10** *"not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."*
   3) It seems to be out of fashion today OR is not PC for Christians to do anything that might cause division, **BUT if you are going to bear the cross of Christ** (Lk. 14:27) rather than wear one around your neck as jewellery, it will mean people won't understand and may even think wrongly of you.
   4) What you do and what you wear is it done so for cultural acceptance or your adoration of Christ?

c. **3rd –** Not only are we to have
   1) ***COURAGE*** to do right and obey God;
   2) **COURAGE *"to come out"*** from among the nations, BUT…
   3) We are also to have ***COURAGE*** to obediently ***CLEAVE*** unto the Lord **– Vs. 8**

4. You and I have the same promise of victory for our future as Israel did for theirs! **Therefore, Love the Lord – for only HE is worthy of your total devotion!**

   a. **Vs. 10 –** No enemy will be big enough to conqueror or ruin you.

   b. When we stand for our great God He stands for us! **BUT realise this promise is CONDITIONAL**—it is conditional upon our faithfulness to Him and to His Word!

c. Whatever you face, you will win in the long-run, **IF you stay faithful!**

ILLUSTRATION

In the Irish Independent Newspaper (28 June 2003) it was reported that, Mark-Vivien Foe, a Cameroon football player, while giving a pep talk to his teammates at half-time said, "Boys, even if it means dying on the pitch, we have to win this semi-final." Within 30 minutes he dropped dead from a heart attack on the pitch. His team Cameroon went on to win the match, beating Columbia 1-0.

He was devoted to the game and winning and gave his all for a game, a game that will NOT change the course of history and for the most part, nobody will remember 5 years after. **BUT** your life can and will make a difference for eternity, if you give to God the same devotion, the same love as this man gave to a game and vain glory.

COURAGE to do right, COMING OUT from the world and identifying with God and his people and CLEAVING unto the Lord bring us to the next principle for victorious living…

B. VS. 7-8 – The 2nd principle has already been briefly addressed – it is *SEPARATION.*

1. **Vs. 7 – Ecclesiastically –** they not only were not to participate with false religions or serve their gods, they were not EVEN to mentions their names. This means we as a church we are not to cooperate or work with churches or religious organisations that are not of like faith as ourselves.
2. **Vs. 12 – Domestically** they were to be separated. Their marriages were to be only to be with other believers who were children of God.
3. **Vs. 8 –** Made it clear that as God's children we are to separate from the world and to cleave unto Him! Just like in marriage!
   a. They were to stick close to Him – the NT believer is told *"to walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"* (Gal. 5:16).
   b. As God's children they were to adhere to all His ways. Let us be very clear. You can't walk in the Spirit if you are not obedient to His Word!
   c. To *"cleave unto the Lord"* (vs. 8) means, in the least, that we are to obediently cling to the commands of His Word.
   d. As in marriage, cleaving to Him means we were to forsake all others. **He is to be love of our lives!**
4. Israel's relationship and worship of God was not limited to just religious or domestic matters, but their attachment to Him meant that **separation was to permeate their lives** separating them from anything in the world that would take them away from their devotion and walk with Him.
   a. **Deut. 18:9 –** *"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt NOT LEARN to do after the abominations of those nations."*
   b. **Jer. 10:2 –** *"Thus saith the Lord, **LEARN NOT** the way of the heathen..."*

Might you also note NOT learn or *"learn NOT"* means NOT to participate in or practice.

5. So when **vs. 11** says we are *"to cleave unto the Lord"* would should understand this to mean we are to forsake the world and only love Jehovah God

1 Jn. 2:15 – *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

6. The 1st Commandment instructs us that we are NOT to have any other gods before our blessed Creator. Jesus stated this command in a positive way in **Mk. 12:30,** where He said, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."*
7. We are to express our love to Him in a number of ways:
   a. By reading His love letters to us—i.e. 66 books of the BIBLE—and then by obeying this heavenly correspondence.
   b. By faithfully attending worship services and studying the Scriptures as a church. This includes SS.
   c. Biblical love is fundamentally expressed by the giving of ourselves: giving of our time; giving of our talents and by giving or our incomes in weekly tithes and offerings supporting the work of God through the local church.

After reviewing the nations position with the leaders and reminding them to re-establish the principles for victory…

III. JOSHUA REMINDED THEM OF THE PENALTY OF FAILURE OF THE FIRST TWO POINTS – 12-16

A. If the principles that God laid out are not followed (to courageously be obedient and separate from the world) – if victory is not maintained Israel, as well as us today, will pay a penalty!

B. 1st Penalty – We will experience Defeat – Vs. 12-13.

1. **Vs. 13 –** *"Know for a certainty God will no more drive out these nations…"* they would remain to mar Israel's inheritance.
2. The Canaanites among them would be like *"snares and traps"* to entangle them, whips to lash them and *"thorns"* that fly back into their faces stabbing their eyes.
3. **Vs. 15-16 –** Relates that miseries and troubles would increase for Israel until they would be dispossessed off the good land, which God had given them.
4. What a sad story of Israel in the O.T. – theirs was a roller coaster history.
   a. Israel's Zenith point as a nation was under David – then they went down hill until 606 B.C. when they dipped so low God removed them into captivity under Nebuchadnezzar for 70 years.
   b. WHY did they have to pay such penalty?
      1) BECAUSE they failed to do all that God had said so do!
      2) BECAUSE they refused to separate themselves from their enemies!
      3) BECAUSE they failed to love God like they ought to!
5. BUT BE WARNED, the same will happen to you AND me if.... we fail to be obedient, refuse to separate, and do not cleave to the Lord and love our God. We'll be defeated and be placed on a shelf.
6. There was no possibility for neutrality in the choice to be made.
   a. Either Israel was to go with God or to the way of the people of Canaan—the way of the world.
   b. So, it is today. There is no middle course to be taken. *"No man can serve two masters"* (Matt. 6:24).

C. 2nd Penalty – We will be Disheartened – Vs. 14.

1. How do you think it was in Babylon for Israel? For 70 years they remembered, they recalled all God's victories and blessings and fellowship they had! **TURN >>** ***Ps. 137:1-4.***
2. If you ever have been backslidden – you didn't feel like singing songs of Zion – you didn't feel like rejoicing in the Lord – you were ***Broken hearted!***

D. 3rd Penalty – Disgrace – Vs. 15-16

IV. CONCLUSION:

The terrible climax of this message to the nation's leaders emphasized the fact that Israel's greatest danger was **NOT** from outside military aggression—it was internal, from moral and spiritual failure.

If Joshua were alive today the strong likelihood is that he would say the same thing to us as he did to this nation.

SEPARATION is vital for the man / woman of God. We cannot cleave to the Lord and be bound to His enemies at the same time. **TURN >> 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1**

If as a Christian you stay in love with God, obeyed God, God promises to defend you and give you daily victory in your life.

If as a Christian you do not keep your relationship with God close and true, loving Him first and foremost, forsaking all others you will experience the dregs and disappointment of defeat. **—The choice is yours!**

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