

***Into the Promise: A Journey Through Joshua***  
**Lesson Ten: “As for Me and My House”**  
**Joshua 23-24**

*God will not allow His children to sin successfully.* <sup>1</sup>  
~ Charles Spurgeon

Israel is in a transitional season. Most of the land has been subdued and the fighting men are being released to return home. They are laying down their swords and picking up their hammers and building a new life in Canaan. While Israel has gained a foothold in the land of Canaan, there are still pockets of resistance to wipe out and remaining territory to possess. The scope of the work has changed in the Promised Land, but the task is not finished.

As it turns out, Israel fares better in the land of Canaan during times of warfare rather than in seasons of peace. After years of warring against her enemies, she becomes complacent and in progressive increments, changes her attitude toward the pagans still occupying the Promised Land. Andy Grove is credited with this quote that seems to fit here, “Success breeds complacency. Complacency breeds failure.” <sup>2</sup>

Most of us have found this principle to be true in our lives as well. In times of trouble, we tend to draw near to the Lord, increasing our time in the Word and amping up our prayer life. Desperation drives us to our knees and heightens our spiritual sensitivity, bringing it to a whole new level. But when we enter into (the rare) seasons of tranquility, when life is on an even keel, we often abandon our fervor and lose intensity in our relationship with the Lord. Complacency creeps in, as does the enemy with his plethora of temptations.

**I. Cling to the Lord (Joshua 23:1-16)**

Joshua, knowing his life is winding down, gathers the elders and leaders together. He reminds them that they have a choice to make: Cling to the Lord and live under the blessings of an open heaven OR cling to the false gods of the Gentiles and experience His judgment.

Joshua commands them to continue in the ways of the Lord as “written in the book of the law of Moses” (Joshua 23:6). They are not to turn to the left or the right “so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. But you are to *cling to the LORD your God*, as you have done to this day” (Joshua 23:7-8, emphasis mine). Choose wisely. Cling fiercely.

Warren Wiesrbe explains:

The word translated “cleave” in verse 8 is used in Genesis 2:24 to describe a husband’s relationship to his wife. Israel was “married” to Jehovah at Mt. Sinai (Jeremiah 2:1-3; Ezekiel 16) and was expected to be a faithful spouse and cleave to the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4). How tragic that she became an unfaithful wife, a prostitute, as she turned to the gods of other nations. <sup>3</sup>

\*Note: The word “cleave” (KJV) is translated “cling” in the NASB, but has the same meaning in the original language.

Israel is to remain a separated people who do not become contaminated by the wickedness of the Gentile nations around them. Joshua warns Israel of the horrific consequences God will render if she chooses to rebel against Him:

For if you ever go back and *cling to the rest of these nations*, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you (Joshua 23:12-13, emphasis mine).

Choose wisely. Cling fiercely. There is so much at stake.

## II. Choose the Lord (Joshua 24:1-33)

After addressing the leaders, Joshua calls for all the tribes of Israel to assemble. Joshua traces Israel's history, starting with God calling an idol worshipper named Abraham and ending with their miraculous possession of the Promised Land. In chapter 24:13, Joshua hits the pause button on his historical review with a call to gratitude. God "gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant" (Joshua 24:13). The only reasonable response to such a grace gift is gratitude. Warren Wiersbe offers this sage advice, "A grateful heart is a strong defense against the devil's temptations."<sup>4</sup>

Joshua picks up his narrative of Israel's history in Joshua 24:14-28. One of the key words in this passage is "serve" (or some form of it) which he uses fifteen times. Service to our King should spring forth from the overflow of a grateful heart. Paul writes a similar admonition in Roman 12:1-2:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (emphasis mine).

Beloved, beware of your service to the Lord originating out of a sense of duty. That will generate legalism, which will have the appearance of wisdom, but the heart motivation will be lacking (Colossians 2:20-23). Like the Israelites, we have received so much! Serve the Lord out of devotion, not duty. It is the only reasonable response to His mercy and grace. May we "serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2).

Joshua reminds the Israelites of the overarching theme of his life, declaring, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). In the early days of his relationship with God, Joshua had determined that he would walk worthy of the Lord. When he took a wife and started a family, he was zealous about being an example of a godly husband and father. In his private life and in his public life, I believe it is safe to assume that he faithfully obeyed God's commands, made worship a priority, was devoted to the Word of God, and exhibited a sweet spirit and kind words.

Roger Ellsworth reminds us, "Our homes are both mission fields and battlefields—mission fields, in that they give us the opportunity to extend to others the knowledge of God, and battlefields, in that we can be sure that Satan will spare no effort to resist the labours of godly husbands and fathers [and godly wives and mommas]."<sup>5</sup>

Living out our faith before our children sets them up to hear from the Lord and desire a personal relationship with Him. We cannot believe for our children, but we can raise them in a godly environment that will aid in their spiritual development and point them to Jesus. However, each child must make a personal decision to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Some, despite a godly upbringing, will reject Jesus. This heartbreaking decision of your child must be met with powerful prayers and unconditional love as you call upon the Lord to break through their spiritual blindness. Pray “they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). It has been well said that if your children turn out well, be careful not to take too much credit. And if they do not, beware of taking on too much guilt. Each one must choose to receive or reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. “Choose for yourselves today, whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

Joshua challenges them to make a commitment to serve the Lord and keep His Word. The people are quick to vow to obey the Lord. Joshua is wary of their commitment saying, “You will not be able to serve the Lord for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you” (Joshua 24:19-20). The people are adamant. Three times they vow that they will serve the Lord. He is aware some are still worshiping false gods and have idols among their possessions. Joshua admonishes them to remove those idols and turn to the one true God. Still, they persist in promising to obey the Lord.

Beloved, talk is cheap. Genuine change, revealed in word and deed, validates a changed heart.

The book of Joshua ends with his death at 110 years, after a life well-lived to the glory of the Lord. “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel” (Joshua 24:31). Well done, Joshua.

Sadly, after the death of Joshua, the Israelites begin to take God’s good hand of blessing for granted. This starts a slow drift away from sincere worship of the one true God. Several generations later “there arose a generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). Ultimately, this ushered in the era of the Judges when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Joshua is an Old Testament picture of the of the Lord Jesus. The death of Joshua reminds us that we need a Savior who will not die, but lives forever. Jesus, the once for all sacrifice died for our sin, but was raised from the dead. And all who have received Him by repentance and faith will one day join the throng of the redeemed singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come” (Revelation 4:8). “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and rites and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

Until that day, beloved, may we step *Into the Promise* of the abundant life of Christ and live for His glory!

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Strong*, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/andy\\_grove\\_471638](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/andy_grove_471638)

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Strong*, p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Strong*, p. 154.

<sup>5</sup> Ellsworth, Roger, *Opening up Joshua*, p. 120.