

REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS



+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

God's people must remember the great things He has done as they obey His commands today and look forward to the fulfillment of His promises tomorrow.

+ BACKGROUND PASSAGE:

Joshua 23

+ SETTING:

Through the direction, work, and provision of the Lord, the Israelites graduated from the phase of conquest to the phase of distributing the spoils of their new land and finally to the phase of resting from war. While God was faithful and merciful in giving them this promised land, He also is the holy One who could take it all away if they chose to be unfaithful to His covenant with them. So Joshua, in his old age, summoned all of Israel to plead with them to obey the covenant that they might honor their Lord and continue to enjoy His blessing upon them.

DAY 1

READ:

Joshua 10:1-15

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 10:14

NOTES

The stories of the Old Testament can seem so unreal to us at times: Did the Red Sea really separate to allow the Israelites to cross on dry ground? Did water really pour out of a rock? Did the sun really stand still when Joshua commanded it to?

And of course, the answer is yes. Yes, these things happened. Yes, the Red Sea did part. Yes, water poured forth from a rock. Yes, the sun truly did stand still. The truthfulness of these accounts isn't really the reason we ask the questions we do. There's another question, one behind all our other questions, one that we don't even want to admit that we need the answer to. But it's one that we find the answer to at the very end of the account of Israel's battle against the king of Jerusalem.

After Joshua called on the sun to stand still, we are told that this was a unique event in history. It was, and remains, the only time the Lord heeded the voice of a man. But God didn't listen to Joshua on account of the Israelites' faithfulness. God did so because of His own faithfulness. He was fighting for Israel. He was there with them. He was committed to their victory in the conquest of Canaan.

That's why these stories are present in the Bible. They are pictures of His faithfulness, of His absolute, unrelenting commitment to fulfill His purposes and fight for His people. But this faithfulness wasn't just for the past—the Lord is faithful right now. God was, is, and always will be faithful to His people. He is for them—He is for us. And we know this because of Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection provided the greatest example of God's absolute and unrelenting commitment to His people. We are victorious over sin because of Jesus. We are more than conquerors in Christ. We are His people—and He will never leave nor forsake us.

In what circumstances do you need to be reminded of God's faithfulness today?

DAY 2

READ:

Joshua 12–13; 21:43–45

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 21:43–45

NOTES

The Book of Joshua, despite including harrowing tales of conquest and miraculous demonstrations of God's power and faithfulness, is filled with lists. About half the book, from chapters 12–21, is almost exclusively made of lists that detail how the promised land—Canaan—was divided between the twelve tribes of Israel: which tribe was appointed to which region, which cities were places of refuge, and so forth. For those expecting the same kind of action seen up through chapter 11, these chapters can feel like a letdown.

But from a better and right perspective, these chapters are incredibly beautiful because they are not simply lists—they are a promise fulfilled. God promised when He brought Israel out of Egypt that He would give them rest. And at the end of chapter 21, we read that this is exactly what God did. All of God's promises came to pass; not even one failed. Everything, absolutely everything, God promised was fulfilled.

That's how faithful God is. Not a single promise of His will ever fail. Not a single promise will be left unfulfilled. And that is good news for us today as we look at the world around us marked by unrest and strife, pain and suffering, sorrow and death. Just looking at the state of the world, it's tempting to despair. But God has given us a promise—a promise of eternal rest that all who are weary and burdened by sin can enjoy forever (Matt. 11:28). Eternal rest is found in the eternal presence of Jesus, in a world made new, free from sin and sorrow forevermore (Rev. 21:1–4). And while that promise has yet to be fulfilled, we know it will be someday. Jesus will return, and we will enjoy rest with Him forever. Because we have the proof of God making good on all His promises in the past, we know He will make good on this one as well.

How does being reminded of God's past faithfulness give you hope for today and tomorrow?

DAY 3

READ:

Joshua 23:1-5

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 23:1-5

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #70: UNION WITH CHRIST

At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.

In virtually every epic film, there's a rousing speech given to motivate, encourage, and strengthen the heroes to face the challenges that lie ahead. Independence Day had Thomas J. Whitmore's famous "This is our Independence Day" rallying cry as he called upon the world to fend off an alien invasion. Avengers: Endgame had Captain America's time-heist pep talk. And who could forget Aragorn's call for his army to stand strong and fight at the Black Gate in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King.

Joshua 23 is, in many ways, Joshua's epic rallying cry. But it didn't come before a great battle. It came after many years of relative peace in the promised land. He was old, perhaps 110, and near the end of his life. The Israelites would soon be without their leader, the successor to Moses. So he reminded them of God's faithfulness to them: how the Lord had fought for them, had given them the land He promised, and how He would continue to fight for them and fulfill His promises. But why did they need this rallying cry, this metaphorical call to arms? Because Israel would soon be at a crossroads—they would have to choose between remaining obedient to the God who had been faithful to them or to abandon Him and go their own way. Joshua's rallying cry was a call to faithfulness, to trust and obey the Lord with thoughts, feelings, and actions grounded in a knowledge of who He is and what He has done.

This is what God wants for Christians today as well. It's why we need to consider God's story of redemption so we can remember how we have seen God's faithfulness in our own salvation, both in rescuing us from sin and in conforming us more and more to the image of His Son and our Savior, Jesus.

What is one area of your life where you will pursue greater obedience to God?

DAY 4

READ:

Joshua 23:6-13

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 23:11-13

NOTES

Leadership experts typically describe culture as being the result of the positive behaviors we reward and the negative behaviors we tolerate, and this is certainly true. What we experience, both positively and negatively, shapes how we interact with the world around us and with one another. This is, in part, why we need to take seriously the many calls in Scripture to watch our life and doctrine closely (see 1 Tim. 4:16). We need to pay attention to what we say we believe and to how we live in light of it. If our stated beliefs and our lives aren't relatively in sync, there could be cause for concern.

This problem isn't unique to our time, or even to the time of the early church. The issue of culture's effect on the faith of God's people has been present since the days of Joshua, and even before that. When we read Joshua's warning against intermarrying with the people of the land of Canaan, we need to recognize it for what it is—a caution against tolerating that which would lead the Israelites away from faithfully following Yahweh, the God of Israel. The surrounding peoples worshiped false gods with no life or power, gods that were not gods at all.

This problem still exists today. There are influences all around us trying to draw us away from our love for Christ. But only a few are the sort of overt influences that might come to mind quickly. Most are far more subtle: the messages we allow to wash over us in pop culture; the small thrill we get when we hear (or spread) a bit of gossip; the dopamine hit when someone likes our hot take on social media. All of these threaten to draw us away from the Lord, and our answer in response must be the same as Joshua's: Turn away! Because if we don't, what we tolerate will eventually become what we celebrate.

How will you address the influences in your life that have the potential to draw you away from faithfulness to God?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"For faithful is he who has promised that 'a thousand shall be chased by one,' and that 'ten thousand shall be put to flight by two,' victory in battle being due not to numbers but to righteousness."¹

-Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395)

DAY 5

READ:

Joshua 23:14-16

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 23:14-16

NOTES

As children, many of us no doubt said something like this in a moment of anger: “When I grow up and have kids, I’m going to let them do whatever they want!” None of us enjoyed being disciplined by our parents. It was unpleasant. It didn’t seem fair. It was too much—even when it was too lenient. But it wasn’t until we grew up, and perhaps became parents ourselves, that we began to see the truth. Discipline is far from unloving or unkind. Discipline, when handled correctly, is an act of love, a way of saying, “I love you too much to allow you to live this way.”

When we read the Bible and are confronted by accounts of God’s judgment and His discipline of His people, we’re probably transported back to the childish mindset that shaped our view of discipline. “How could God—a God who is love—do this?” we might ask. And when we ask, we need to remind ourselves of the truth: God is so devoted to His people that He will not let them easily backslide into behavior that will hurt them and hurt their relationship with Him. He will discipline His children when they need it, not out of cruelty but out of love.

And so, when we experience discipline today, we need to view it through this lens—as an act of correction given by a faithful and loving Father. God will use testing, trials, and suffering to draw us back to Himself in repentance and faith. The good news is that His loving discipline serves to fortify our faith and renew our relationship with Him (Jas. 1:2-4). This loving act of God’s faithfulness can be counted as yet another blessing to add to our list of His faithful acts on our behalf!

How have you experienced discipline or correction from the Lord in the past? How did it draw you closer to Him?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"God doesn't need your help revising Scripture; he knew exactly what he wanted to say when he put together his Word. Your job is to believe what you find in it and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to obey it."²

-Tony Evans

POINT 1: A Call to Reflect on All That the Lord Has Accomplished (Josh. 23:1-5)

Joshua urged all Israel to remember _____ that the Lord had done for them. The _____—not Joshua nor the Israelites—had won the promised land and given it to them.

? What are some things the Lord has done for you, particularly in the last week?

Joshua wanted Israel to remember what the Lord had done so they would _____ to _____ the Lord in the _____ as they took full possession of the promised land.

POINT 2: A Call to Recommit to Obey All That the Lord Has Commanded (Josh. 23:6-13)

Joshua connected remembering God's faithful actions with _____ God, being _____ to God, and _____ His commands.

? What are some ways believers need to take care to ensure they are loving the Lord?

Sinful associations with pagan nations would threaten to separate Israel from their _____ and thus their _____.

? How should believers navigate their relationships with others?

POINT 3: A Call to Remember All That the Lord Has Promised (Josh. 23:14-16)

_____ is a universal consequence for every sinful human being, and yet, like Joshua, we will find that the Lord has _____ been faithful to fulfill every one of His promises.

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At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a _____ relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through _____ (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all _____.

? Why is the believer's promise of sure salvation in Christ not a license to sin?

MY RESPONSE

Because we rest in the completed work of Jesus for our salvation and relationship with God, we seek to obey God out of love and gratitude while warning others to turn from their sin and turn to Christ alone for their salvation.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways believers can reflect the faithfulness of God?
- **HEART:** How will you reevaluate your present circumstances in light of God's faithfulness?
- **HANDS:** What are some specific ways you will obey the Lord's commands this week?

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The Bible explains that the Lord is good and the Lord never betrays his own fundamental character of love. His actions are out of love, including his discipline of his people (Ps. 145:9; Heb. 12:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:3). As for judgment against the wicked, if the Lord does not respond to evil by appropriate measures of retribution, then he is not acting justly. Justice is as essential to the character of the Lord as is his love. If there is no justice, then love is empty sentimentality."³

-Kenneth Mathews