

Remember and Respond

Joshua

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Well, we come to our final message out of the book of Joshua here this evening with a great sense of anticipation for what the Lord has for us tonight. Last week we started to consider what it was that believers were supposed to take from this book, as we saw the conquering of the land and the division of the land in chapters 3 through 22, and now we come to a closing exhortation from Joshua. Joshua gives two speeches at the end of this book to exhort the people of Israel to remember God's faithfulness and to respond in obedience, and by the time we're done this evening, you're going to see that the principles that were supposed to motivate Israel going forward from the days of Joshua, are the exact same principles that are supposed to motivate us to faithfulness in our own spiritual lives. We're not looking at some dusty history here from 3,000 years ago that really has very little to do with the present day life of the believer, this has everything to do with the way that we approach spiritual life. And I like the survey studies that we do on Tuesday nights because I like for you to see the big picture of things and to pull things together. It's good to examine things under a microscope in careful verse by verse exposition, that's what we try to do on Sundays, but I also want us to be able to see the forest as well as the individual trees, and so that's what we tried to do here, at least in these early books studies from the Old Testament.

Look at Joshua 23 as we open up this evening. Joshua, he gives two speeches here at the end and it's sort of his dying address to the leaders and then to the people of Israel and he is admonishing them to remember the faithfulness of God and to respond in obedience. Look at the first three verses of Joshua 23 so that you can see what it is that he is doing and why we're considering this. He says, "Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers," so you see he's speaking to their leadership," and said to them, "I am old, advanced in years." Now picture, as it were, this aged, he along with Caleb is the oldest man in Israel. He has led them to great victories and has overseen the beginning of the division of the land and so he is an esteemed leader as he is speaking with them, and yet as he speaks with them, he is mindful of the fact that the people are still prone to wander even though they have seen these great victories from the Lord. There are still other foreign nations that are in the land that need to be driven out, and Joshua is not going to be the man to do that deliverance. It's time for him to exit the stage

and so he's passing this responsibility off to the leadership and he is calling them and he is reminding them of what God has done so that they will finish the task. One of the things about a godly man and about a godly leader, one of the things that you as parents want to start to cultivate in your approach to your families and the way that you're dealing with your children, is that you want to be consciously mindful of the fact that you want the spiritual work that has begun in your life to outlive you. We want the spiritual life of Truth Community Church to outlive us and Joshua, having been a great spiritual man for many decades, wants the spiritual work to continue on after he is gone to witness it with his own eyes.

He says in verse 3, he says, "you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God is He who has been fighting for you." So these are his opening words to the leaders.

Now, to the nation, to the people in general, we see that in chapter 24. Look at verse 1 here and we're going to kind of look at these two speeches collectively for the sake of time and efficiency. Joshua 24:1 says, "Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel,'" and then he goes on, launches into his speech which we will look at a little bit later.

For now, I just wanted you to see that he's giving a final address in a couple of different settings, and what is it, here's the thing, what is it that a dying man has on his lips? What is it that this spiritual leader who is about to leave his nation behind, what is it that is on his mind? What does the book that bears his name teach the people to do? What should animate them? What are they supposed to remember? How are they supposed to respond? We're going to see four principles and four themes here this evening and it's all very clear, it's very much just on the surface of the book of Joshua when you know what to look for. But these are the things, beloved, that framed your own spiritual life as well. These are the exact same principles that will motivate you, that will keep your heart encouraged, that will stimulate you to faithfulness and obedience. There are no tricks in the spiritual life. There are no hidden secrets that some teachers know that aren't available to all of you in the Scriptures and just reading them and respecting them for what they are and we're going to see that as we look at Joshua here tonight.

The first principle, the first anchoring principle for us that Joshua taught the elders as well, 1. To respect the word of God. To respect the word of God, and if you're thinking that maybe I'm going to say something new that you've never heard from this pulpit before tonight, it's not going to happen. We just need to review the familiar things and be good at what we know and let that sink in deeply to us because these are the things that God uses to accomplish his work in the lives of his people and you see it from beginning to end in the book of Joshua.

This book is framed by the centrality of God's word. Go back to Joshua 1. I want you to see these bookends of the emphasis on God's word from beginning to end that is in this

book. Joshua 1:7, we looked at these verses a couple of weeks ago. From the beginning, God called Joshua and he said, "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." Emphasizing to Joshua, "Pay heed to my word. Obey my word so that you would experience the blessing that comes from obedience." It's the same thing that we emphasize in our own lives today.

As you go on through the book of Joshua, at key points in the middle of the book, the priority of Scripture is again emphasized. Look over at Joshua 8. We're just identifying themes and seeing the centrality of certain themes in the book. After the victory at Ai, they turned to Scripture again. Joshua 8:30, "Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel." Drop down to verse 34, "Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them." God's word, God's word, God's word, after victory, before the battle, after the battle. It's all about God's word.

One of the things that I noticed in this that I just call your attention to as a brief side note to help you understand why we do ministry the way we do at Truth Community, look at verse 35 again with me there. This is not insignificant. Notice that when Joshua is reading the law of Moses before all the assembly, notice who was there: the women and the little children. We think it's a good thing here at Truth Community Church, we think it's good for the little children to be a part of the public exposition of God's word; to gather together with the adults and that that's the expected pattern from Scripture is that children would be there as a part of that, not separated out, not segregated out like they were not wanted or they were a disturbance or that they weren't able to understand. Also, if you think about it, in the book of Ephesians, we'll get to this eventually, when Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, he said in chapter 6, "Children obey your parents." Well, how are the children going to hear that unless they are there when Paul's letter is being read to the congregation? He assumed that they were going to be in the middle of the congregation as the book was read.

So for you young people that are here today, 8, 10, 12, 14 years old, even younger, understand that you belong with the people of God. Whether you know Christ yet or not, you belong here. We welcome you. We want you to be a part of the reading of God's word, and what that means for you even as a little 4 or 5-year-old girl, what that means for you is that God has something for you; God has something for you in the preaching of

God's word as well, even if you're not able to understand everything that is said. And what you should be thinking as a really young person, you look around and observe the adults that are in the worship center and you see how they have their Bible open and they're listening and they're paying attention to what the speaker, what the preacher is saying, what the pastor is saying, and you say, "Oh, that's how I behave in the public worship also. We come here and we respect God's word. We open it up. We follow in the Scriptures. We listen with attention and we honor God that way."

And for you parents, I just want to commend you as I've said many times to you privately and also publicly and I just want to re-emphasize this, I know, the elders know, that this in some ways this isn't the easiest way for you to do church. We realize that there are other things that are on the shelf at other places but I insist and promise to you that the long-term benefit of raising your family in a church like this is going to reap rewards and fruit for you that are incalculable beyond anything that a clown in a funny suit can do for you on Sunday morning. And I know that you all realize that, I know that you embrace that, that's why you're here, that's why you keep coming, but I just want to thank you for your faithfulness, encourage you in your faithfulness, and to just give you a sense from God's word that that's the way it's supposed to be. You're doing what you're supposed to be doing when you bring your children into the public worship of God and under the teaching of God's word. So it's exciting to contemplate what that's going to mean for us in the future. That's all a little bit of a tangent but I just want to emphasize that because it's right there in the text: the little ones were living among them; the little ones where there in the assembly. The children of believers belong with believers as worship is taking place.

Well, with all of that said, when Joshua exhorted the people at the end of his life, going back to chapter 23, he calls them in light of these Scriptures that we've seen, he calls them to honor the commands and the promises of God's word. He calls them to commitment. Look at Joshua 23 now. Joshua 23, beginning in verse 5, he says, "The LORD your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 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." He tells them to cling tightly to God's word, to have it in their minds, to read it, to meditate upon it, so that it would help them remain faithful. And, beloved, as we gather together week by week, Sundays and Tuesdays together and you're so faithful to do that, understand that you're positioning yourself for that kind of blessing from God.

I don't mind telling you and I'm not preaching to the choir here tonight, but it concerns me over time when you see people who can come in and out, in and out, in and out, and, you know, it's not that attendance is mandatory, it's that you're missing out. People miss out on the blessings of God when they are haphazard about their attendance, and the way that it works is that one week on, two weeks off, two weeks on, three weeks off, people think that they are being faithful but if they looked at the pattern over time, they would

see that actually it's not working out that way. So I just want to affirm you and encourage you in your faithfulness to the word of God that this is something that we're to cling tightly to; that we are to lay hold of and be faithful to. Look at verse 6 with me again. Joshua says, "Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of God. Be firm in your conviction. Be firm in your commitment because in the word of God is your blessing."

Look over at chapter 24, verse 26, as we're just seeing Joshua's call for people to respect the word of God. Joshua 24:26, "Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. Joshua said to all the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.' Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance." Here's the point for tonight: the word of God is a bookend, it's functioning as bookends to the whole text of Joshua. At the beginning, "Joshua, be strong and courageous and pay heed to the law of Moses"; at the end, you see the same emphasis coming back out. And what Israel was supposed to understand through the structure of this book and through Joshua's exhortation, is that the word of God was the key to their blessing; that being firm and being faithful and being obedient to God's word was the key to blessing. So like any spiritual leader, Joshua is desiring the blessing of his people when he calls them to obedience and to firmness and to faithfulness to God's word. Obedience brings blessing. God's word brings his favor, and to neglect it, to drift from it, to sin against it, is to bring curses and judgment and discipline upon yourself. And so Joshua is laying this out before them, "Recognize the centrality of God's word and respond to it and obey it so that the blessing of God would be upon you."

It reminds me, turn over to 2 Timothy just so you can see that the New Testament emphasis is the same and that we stay the course in our commitment to Scripture without varying into different philosophies of ministry because it is here that the blessing of God is found with an open Bible in front of us. 2 Timothy 4, Paul is exhorting Timothy, this is Paul's dying manifesto also; this is the last words that we have from the Apostle Paul. Notice the parallels to how Paul was telling Timothy to carry on the work after he was gone to what Joshua said to the elders of Israel for them to carry on the work after Joshua was gone. He says in chapter 4, verse 1, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom," O Timothy, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." Do you see the pattern? Joshua says, "These are my last words to you. Stay true to the word." Paul 2,000 years later, 1,500 years later, speaking in very rough round terms, 1,500 years later to Timothy saying the exact same thing to him, there's just more revelation for Timothy to draw upon but he's saying, "Timothy, stay to the word. Preach the word. Don't neglect the word."

Don't turn aside even though society goes a different direction, though other spiritual people want to abandon the word of God. Don't you do that. You stay firm."

And so for the people of God, for us as individual Christians, for us as a church, for the people of God, when this concept of respecting the word settles into our thinking and becomes the anchor around which everything else turns, I realize that I mixed metaphors there, that's okay, but becomes the pivot point around which that we do everything, when you understand that, then you are less prone to drift. You're less prone to be enticed by other philosophies of ministry that deemphasize the word of God and produce more visible results in the short term. We're not interested in short-term results. That's not what motivates us. What we care about is having an enduring ministry that will stand the test of time, and even more importantly, will meet with the approval of God when we stand before Christ in judgment. That's what we care about and God has laid forth in his word that what survives the test at his judgment is trust in Christ; what survives the test at judgment is faithfulness to his word, and that's what we're after, that's what we're aiming at. It's not who shows up on Sunday, it's what we're going to say and hear from Christ when we're before him. That's what we care about. It transcends the vicissitudes of life and human opinion here on earth.

Now, so we respect the word of God. Joshua not only teaches the centrality of God's word, it goes further as Joshua is talking to the people. Joshua goes further and interprets for them the significance of God's acts in the history of the nation. So, secondly, if you were taking notes, the second point that Joshua calls them to is: to remember the power of God. Remember the power of God. This nation, this generation, had seen displays of God's power that should motivate them to obedience and make them fearful of sinning.

Go back to Joshua 23 now and see what Joshua says to them, says to the leadership in this closing address, this final exhortation that he gives to them in Joshua 23:9, after he had said in verse 8, "you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day." Verse 9, notice how he reminds them of their immediate recent past, of their military conquests in summary form. He says, "the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day." Remember the power of God. Remember how he displayed it and defeated mighty nations before you and you put them to flight. Verse 10, "One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you." Now look at what he says in verse 11, "So, here's the application that you're supposed to draw from this," he says to the nations, "here's what you're supposed to take as your departing conviction now that God has done this. What should your attitude be in response?" Verse 11, "take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God."

For those of you that are Christians here tonight, for those of you that have seen the power of God rescue you from sin and change your life, those of you that have seen great providences in your life where God has done things for you that cannot be humanly explained, for those of us which is all of us in this room, who have shared in the birth of this church and seen the great way that God did things that were beyond human planning, not only informing us together as a group of people but even planting us in this location

which was not something humanly targeted, humanly planned, what do you do in response to that? What shapes your heart? What shapes your affection? What becomes the dominating, motivating factor in your heart? Verse 11, look at it there, "take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God."

Listen, beloved, I say this as a sympathetic pastor, I say this needing to hear it myself, I say this to help you and strengthen you, not to correct you because you don't need correcting on this, but with all that God has done for us, with all the blessing that we have seen in our individual lives and corporately in this church and with the bright future that is ahead of us, this is not the time to step back and relax and say, "Okay, now we've arrived." Now when a Christian is on the receiving end of that kind of great work from God, it motivates him all the more. If we have received some blessing, then we need to pay heed all the more so that we would respond in a faithful, responsible way to the blessing that God has given. "We have been so greatly blessed, I'm going to pay heed even more," is the attitude that you come away with with that. When God has displayed his power in your life, you pay all the more attention. You don't take the future for granted.

Where had they seen God's power? Well, let's just look at some of the historical things that Joshua was alluding to. God miraculously brought them across the Jordan River, look back at Joshua 3, just to remind you of some of the great moments in history that were echoing in Joshua's mind as he exhorted the people. In Joshua 3, you remember that they miraculously crossed the Jordan River in order to enter into the Promised Land. We won't go into the whole story of it, just to remind you and to point it out so that you know where it's at in your Bibles, Joshua 3:14, "So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest)," watch this, "the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap," it kind of reminds you of the crossing of the Red Sea, doesn't it, "a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan."

They had seen, they had walked through a flowing river on dry ground. They saw what none of us have ever seen, is that water unrestrained was standing in a heap and they walked through a river on dry ground and saw water, contrary to the laws of nature, standing up when it should have been flowing. Joshua tells them, "You remember the power of God. As you entered into this land, remember what God did for you so that you would fear him; so that you would respect him; so that you would be motivated to obey further in the future." It is ever the fear of a spiritual leader that the people under his watch will start to drift away; that they will lose interest; that they will forget and get wrapped up in the things that are right in front of them and forget the work that God has done. Joshua says to the nation, "You remember the power of God. You saw things that

very few human eyes have seen. And having remembered that, let that shape your conviction to be faithful going forward."

In Joshua, God gave them the city of Jericho apart from normal human means. Look over at chapter 6, verse 1. As we're looking at these things, you know, I would just encourage you to have operating on a second track in your mind, remembering the great things that God has done in your own life and let that stir you up to remember with gratitude the way that God has worked powerfully in you as well so that the exhortation that Joshua brings out of this would connect in your own heart as well and you would walk out of here motivated to continue in the faithfulness that you're established in already. We need these exhortations. We need to remember our God.

Joshua 6:1, reminding you of a story that you know well. "Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. The LORD said to Joshua, 'See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead.'" You know what happened, look over at verse 20, chapter 6, verse 20, "So the people shouted," this is seven days into the event, "the people shouted and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword."

So, Joshua reminds them, "You walked through a river on dry ground. Do you remember how that great city with the great wall fell at the sound of human voices? This is contrary to human expectation. This is contrary to the normal course of human life, and you saw that, you experienced it. You have been recipients of the power of God exercised on your behalf." He says, "Remember that." He's telling them at the end of the book, "Remember these things and therefore be faithful going forward. Don't sin against your past. Don't sin against what God has formerly done for you by drifting away now that you're on the receiving end of so much blessing from God."

There was one more event that we'll call attention to in chapter 10, another miraculous deliverance that God gave to them. And the reminders of these things shows them that it wasn't by their strength that they attained these victories; these things were beyond human capacity to accomplish. Look at Joshua 10:8. This is the victory at Gibeon. Joshua 10:8, "The LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; not one of them shall stand before you.' So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal. And the LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent of

Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword. Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.' So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel." The sun supernaturally stood still and God rained down great hailstones upon their enemies and the sun stood still to give them time to complete the victory.

So here you have three examples of God's miraculous work: at the Jordan River, at Jericho, and at Gibeon where the sun stood still, all displays of the power of God, Joshua reminding them of these things so that they would be motivated to be faithful. So what happens here, what happens for us now as we read it, you know, thousands of years later, what Israel was supposed to do when they read the book of Joshua was you're supposed to look at this and read this and say, "We serve a powerful God. We serve a God of deliverances. We serve a God who exercises his might on behalf of his people." And he's the same God today in 2015 as he was back then in the days of Joshua. So we have confidence and we trust him and we obey him, trusting him ultimately to exercise his power for our benefit and that keeps us faithful to the word of God.

When we add to it our own past experiences of God's blessings, beloved, do you see how unthinkable it is for us to distrust God, to question God, to disobey God, to drift away because life isn't going the particular direction that we want? We cannot do that. We must be faithful in response to this kind of God. Not simply because we would miss out on the blessing, that is secondary to the whole point. We must be faithful because that is what God is worthy of. We must trust him. We must know him. We must continue walking with him because his power, his might, his grace, deserves that response from his people, and that understanding shapes us to be faithful.

Now, thirdly, respect the word of God, remember the power of God, thirdly, remember the faithfulness of God. Joshua calls his people to in these simple, direct statements that he makes to them. Look at chapter 23, verse 14, Joshua says, "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth," I'm going to die soon, "and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed." What he is saying is, "As I am about to depart, let me remind you of what you already know. God made promises to his people and you here as my audience here today," Joshua says, "you have been on the receiving end of that faithfulness. You have been an eyewitness to it. You know for yourself that God has done what he said he would do, therefore be faithful. Be obedient. Don't intermingle with these nations that remain to

be driven out. There is no excuse for that. You now are under a responsibility of complete allegiance to this God who has been so good," is what he's saying.

He lays out the faithfulness of God to them in the past as a motivation for them to be faithful to God in the future, and for the same for us tonight, the same for us as Christians going about our daily walk. Oh beloved, beloved, I ask you because I know the answer. Attorneys never ask questions that they don't know the answer to if they are smart. That's how you get tripped up in court, you ask a question...I'm not going to get off into that. Let me ask you a question that I already know the answer to: haven't you yourself been on the receiving end of the faithfulness of God? Didn't God come to you with power through his word and convict you of sin and turn your heart away from falsehood, away from sin in such a powerful way that you received new life through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Isn't that true? That's true, isn't it? You've seen that. You know that for yourself, don't you? You've personally experienced that as a converted Christian. Since then, haven't you seen God answer prayer for you? Haven't you seen him provide for you in ways that were unexpected? Hasn't he made the fellowship with other Christians sweet to you? Hasn't his word been opened up to you in your private reading and in your study and those truths have become so precious to you and sweeter to you than the honeycomb and better than the finest things that this world has to offer? Isn't that your spiritual experience as a Christian?

Well, you see, this is the same thing that Joshua is saying: you have seen the goodness of God. That should strengthen your resolve. That should bring forth from you a heart commitment that says, "Even though I have staggered in the past few days, even though I have quivered at times, tonight I am going to recommit myself to fidelity and allegiance to Christ because I remember afresh all of the way that he has been good to me in addition to all that he said and promised in his word." In response to the goodness of God, the only thing that we as his people can do is respond with allegiance and fidelity and loyalty and love and obedience and trust. That is the only right thing to do. I am appealing directly to your conscience tonight, to embrace these things and to understand the responsibility and the privilege that is ours to be committed to our Christ in this way without a divided heart.

And for those of you, especially some of you younger ones that you've been sitting on the fence or playing the game, it's time for you to come out of that spiritual mediocrity and give yourself to Christ. It's time to realize, even at your young teenage age, not to take for granted the blessing of God in your life. God has put you in a family that has taught you the word of God. God has put you in a church that has taught you the word of God. You have heard more of the word of God than what billions of people will ever hear in their lifetime, and you're responsible for that. And you've seen from a distance the goodness of God, now it is time for you to submit yourself to Christ and to hand your life to Christ that you might serve him in the allegiance of which he is worthy; to turn from your sinful life and to give yourself to Christ and ask him to save you. It is time for that. It is wrong, it is disobedient, it is dishonorable, for you in light of the goodness of God that has been shown to you, to stand at a distance as if that didn't apply to you. Of course it does and you're responsible for it, young people.

Look at Joshua 24:2. Joshua, reminding them of the faithfulness of God, it says in verse 2 as he speaks to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your father lived,'" fathers, plural, "'lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.'" Abraham was a pagan before God called him. "Then I took," this is God speaking, "Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out." He's giving them a summary of the Pentateuch, isn't he, in just a few short verses? Verse 6, "I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time." Verse 8, "I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you." So, what Joshua is doing here is he's recounting the faithfulness of God going back generations, going back many centuries, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he gives them the whole sweep of biblical history up to that point and says, "Look at the way that God has acted upon his people and for his people. He made promises to Abraham and here you are 700 years later enjoying the benefit of it. Here you are, now you are in the land which Abraham only heard about in promise. Even Moses didn't get to come into this land and here you are in the midst of it. God has blessed you. God has been good to you. God has been faithful to you."

Look at verse 13, and he squeezes out, God squeezes out any sense of pride or self accomplishment from the people as he reminds them of his faithfulness. "I 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." The faithfulness of God. The goodness of God. "You have all of these rich blessings given to you as a gift, given to you out of my faithfulness," God says to them, "I have given you things that you did not earn, but now you enjoy the blessing of them."

Flash forward 3,500 years to today, here we are standing in Christ in the sufficiency of his merit, the sufficiency of his blood; all of our sins forgiven; the Spirit of God dwelling within us; the hope of heaven certain for us; endless ages of perfect bliss and joy and peace ahead of us; all of our sins washed away by what someone else did for us; possessing blessings given to us that we did not earn. You see, what we're doing tonight is really simple. It's the simplicity and the clarity of these things out of which conviction is born in your soul. We have to set aside our circumstances that so engage us from day-to-day. One of the blessings of coming together like this is to set aside our lives and to focus on these things and to see them with clarity so that conviction would be born out of the clarity and the simplicity of the things that are revealed in the word of God; out of the clarity and the simplicity of the work that he has done in our souls. We have been so

richly blessed. He has done so much for our souls. It is incalculable. And in response to that incalculable blessing, we establish in our convictions the fact that it is inconceivable to us that we would ever betray the word of God, that we would ever turn away from it, that we would ever tire of it as if this wasn't the most important thing in the world. That when we hold a Bible in our hands, we hold the greatest thing in the universe that is tangible, received from the invisible God who alone dwells in unapproachable light, and we treasure it, and we're not ashamed to treasure it because this is our life, this is our joy, this is God's word. And as we recognize the blessings that have come undeserved to us and realize that God has mediated that blessing through this written page, then we give our affection to the page as an expression of our allegiance to the God who gave it to us.

I'll just say it one more time: it's the clarity and the simplicity of these things out of which the conviction that makes great lives come forth. There is no one, there is no Christian, who has a low view of God who will ever do great things for Christ. Never. Never. There is no one who is not taught to treasure Calvary that will ever be a giant in the kingdom of God. And when you remember the sin from which you have been delivered, when you remember the judgment which you have now escaped by the mercy of Christ upon you, then the conviction is born for you to be someone who will stand and that's what we want to do.

Now, with all of that in mind, Joshua having reminded them of the respect that they should have for the word of God, the power of God exercised in their national history, how that reflects the faithfulness of God, point 4 tonight: he calls them to respond to the call of God. To respond to the call of God. Joshua calls them to a decision. The word of God and the works of God always place a demand on the will of those who hear. This is meant to influence our volition and our affections. You see, this is meant to shape us in our inner man. This is not about simply making life a little bit better for today or tomorrow, it's not about that at all. These things that we're talking about here go to the very fundamental convictions that frame the way that you live the Christian life. To love the word of God. To respect the power of God. To honor the faithfulness of God. Now in our situation on the other side of the cross, to remember the cross and the resurrection of Christ just like we did Sunday at communion. Remember. Remember. Remember. And then act upon it is the idea.

Look at Joshua 24:14. Joshua says, having completed his review of all of these great works of God, he says, "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." He calls them to a commitment of heart. He calls them to a conscious dedication of their allegiance, "In light of everything that God has done for you, I call upon you to fear the Lord and to serve him in simplicity and in truth, in sincerity and in truth." Beloved, as you were nodding with the things that I said earlier, reminding yourselves of the way that God has worked in your life, there should be a sense welling up within you, "Do you know what? I'm as committed as ever

that I am going to be one no matter what anyone else does, I will be one who fears the Lord and serves him with my life without fear, without apology, with great trust and devotion."

Well, you know the story, you know how the people responded. They pledged their loyalty in response to this, verse 16, "The people answered and said, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.'" Joshua says, "You do what you want, my house and me, we're serving the Lord." They said, "We will too."

Now, Joshua wasn't content to just leave it at that because he knows how prone people are to lighthearted commitments, to say one thing when their heart isn't fully engaged in it, and so he warns them. He admonishes them in order to purify their faith, he says to them in verse 19, "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."

You young people that I was talking to earlier, let me say it to you again. I want to be as clear and decisive and pointed with you tonight as I can possibly be. In light of all of the goodness of God that you have experienced, if you would turn away tonight and walk away and say, "I don't care," if you would say in your heart, "I reject it still," understand that you are positioning yourself for an unspeakable level of judgment from God. You can't do that. You can't trivialize these things. And what comes out of your mouth is showing what is actually residing and presiding in your heart.

For all of us, when was the last time that the praise of God joyfully came out of your mouth as opposed to just engaging in another mundane, slightly sinful conversation about the things of this world? Your mouth is telling you what is in your heart. And I say these things not because I'm angry with you, it's because I care about you. It's because I want you to know Christ. It's because I want you to be delivered from the judgment to come. And because I know what it's like to be a young man and to sit under God's word and to reject it in your heart while in the midst of the preaching of it, and to just let it roll off and be utterly indifferent to it. If you're like I used to be, God have mercy on you. You must fear God if you are to be saved.

Look at verse 20 there again, he says, "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." Well, "The people said to Joshua, 'No, but we will serve the LORD.' Joshua said to the people, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.'" He's saying, "You're saying you want to serve the Lord, right?" "Right, that's what we want. We are witnesses." Joshua says to them, "Now therefore, put

away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.' The people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.' So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD." Verse 27, "'Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.' Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance."

There is a final touch of the faithfulness of God at the end of the book. Look at this in verse 32, this is remarkable. Speaking of God's faithfulness, all of this being a testimony to the way that God remembers his word throughout generations. Remember when we finished Genesis and started Exodus, the last four words of the book of Genesis, "in a coffin in Egypt." Joseph was in a coffin in Egypt and before he died he asked the people to take him and bury his bones in the land that was to come. Here we go 400 years later and what did God do? What had God done providentially? Verse 32, "Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons." Four hundred years later. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joseph being one of the great men of patriarchal times, desired to have his bones buried in the land and 400 years after the fact, the children of Israel did just that.

Do you know what that tells us? God simply can't break a promise. God keeps his word. We are under the hand of a loving, gracious Father, who doesn't miss a detail. Whether it's a promise to do good to those who trust and obey him, or to curse those who disobey him, God keeps his word. And as we've said in this series in times past, God keeps it on his timetable. Beloved, don't get flustered by what you see in the news. Don't get flustered by, don't get frightened by the advance of Muslim extremists or homosexual advocates or whatever else you see in the collapse of society around us. I say to you with absolute certainty on the authority of God, more certain than us getting to the parking lot before this night is over, God's righteousness will prevail. God will not allow sin to prevail forever. We may not see it in our lifetime, but that does not diminish the confidence and the certainty with which we move forward in life. We serve a God who reigns, we serve a God who knows his people, who accomplishes his will in his time, and if we belong to him, all is going to be well in the end, so we can endure whatever personal or national or ecclesiastical setbacks we see in the meantime. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I will build my church," and if we belong to Christ and if we walk in the word, we will see the goodness of the Lord displayed in the land of the living. Without fear, without fail, God keeps his promises.

So in light of that, we respect God's word, we remember his power, we remember his faithfulness, and we respond to the call of God. "Yes, Lord, we will be loyal. We will give our allegiance to Christ. We will follow you as long as you give us breath." We set that as the high aspiration of our heart, the controlling, defining principle of our

existence, and realize that when it's all said and done, that even then, we'll appear before the Lord and say, "We are unprofitable servants. We've only done what we should have done." And we'll bow down and we'll worship this God who has been incredibly good, powerful, and faithful to us. That is our destiny in Christ.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we pray that you would ever help us to be a people who are faithful to your word, who respect and honor your power, who remember and praise you for your faithfulness, who are always a people who fear the Lord and teach his word. Individually and corporately, Lord, make us a people like that as we remember your great faithfulness as we sing now. In Christ's name. Amen.

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