

As for Me and My House

Text: Joshua 24:1-21 (Read Vs. 1-31)

Introduction:

1. The Occasion (Vs. 1) – Joshua is “old and stricken in age” (23:1). Sensing his time on earth is drawing to a close, he gives his final charges to Israel beginning with the leaders in chapter 23 and then the nation in chapter 24. Some have called this “Joshua’s valedictory speech”.
2. The Location (Vs. 1) – Joshua selects Shechem for his final address to the nation. This was not by happenstance. Shechem was a significant location in the history of the nation. Some important events had taken place at Shechem in the past.
 - It was in Shechem that Abraham built his first altar of worship to God upon entering the land of Canaan for the first time (Gen. 12:6-7).
 - It was in Shechem that Jacob charge his household to put away the strange gods that were among them (Gen. 35:2, 4). *“And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”* (Vs. 4)
 - Keil & Delitzsch: “The exhortation to be faithful to the Lord, and to purify themselves from all idolatry, could not fail to make a deep impression, in the place where the honored patriarch had done the very same things to which his descendants were exhorted here. The example preached more loudly in this spot than in any other.”
 - S. Grant states, “Shechem was associated with the presence of the Lord and the renunciation of idolatry.”
3. The Theme – Joshua exhorts the nation to be faithful servants of the Lord God. The word ‘serve’ occurs 16 times in the passage with 6 of them occurring in Vs. 14-15. We will consider 3 important facets of service to the Lord:

I. The Motivation for Service (Vs. 2-13)

Joshua starts his address with a brief review of Israel’s history commencing with Abrahams call and culminating with Israel’s inheritance in the land. The focus of this section is upon what God had done for them. The Divine Personal Pronoun “I” occurs 18 times! E.g. “I took”, “I gave”, “I sent”, “I brought”, “I destroyed”, “I delivered”. God had done great and marvelous things for Israel and this forms the basis of the call to service in Vs. 14 – “now therefore”. We can divide God’s gracious dealings with Israel into five categories:

A. The Compassion of the Lord - Abraham (Vs. 2-4)

1. Joshua begins with the faithfulness of God in the calling of Abraham out of heathen idolatry. It is as though he says, "Look, O Israel to the hole of the pit whence ye were hewn." (Meyer)
2. Genesis 12:1-2 *"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."*
3. God in mercy called Abraham to salvation, service and separation.
4. Joshua is tracing the hand of God in their history, the pattern of His grace and mercy. Israel was blessed with a godly heritage.

B. The Redemption of the Lord – Egypt (Vs. 5-6)

1. God's Discipline of Egypt (Vs. 5a)
 - a. "Moses and Aaron" = God's messengers
 - b. "I plagued Egypt" = God dealt with the enemy
2. God's Deliverance from Egypt (Vs. 5b-6a)
 - a. "I brought you out" = twice God mentions this fact (also in Vs. 6). God delivered Egypt from the bondage of Egypt. The lambs were slain, the blood applied and the people set free!
 - b. Do we remember the goodness of God in our salvation when in His grace and mercy, He redeemed us and set us free from sin and Satan?

C. The Preservation of the Lord – Enemies (Vs. 7-10)

1. The Conflicts of the Enemy (Vs. 7-8)
 - a. The Egyptians at the Red Sea
 - i. God was their shield – "he put darkness between you and the Egyptians"
 - ii. God was their sword – "and brought the sea upon them"
 - b. The Amorites at Jordan - Og and Sihon (Num. 21:21-35)
2. The Curses of the Enemy (Vs. 9-10)
 - a. Balak's Scheme (Vs. 9)
 - i. This was a battle of a different kind. When the enemy cannot defeat us with war, he will try to defeat us with words!
 - ii. Satan accuses the brethren day and night and all too often with devastating effect (Rev. 12:10). Satan point out your faults and failures not to help you but to hinder you; not to build you but to break you; not to edify you but to defeat you.
 - b. God's Sovereignty (Vs. 10)

D. The Action of the Lord – Conquest (Vs. 11-12)

1. The delivering over of the enemy (Vs. 11)
2. The driving out of the enemy (Vs. 12) See promise of Ex. 23:27-28. God had kept His promise!

E. The Provision of the Lord – Inheritance (Vs. 13)

1. God gave them land, lodgings and a livelihood.
2. God provided all their need in the promised land.
3. So, in the Christian life, we have been blessed with abundant blessings in Christ. We are “*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*” (Eph. 1:3)

II. The Exhortation to Service (Vs. 14-15)

A. The Charge to Serve (Vs. 14)

Observe 4 truths about how we are to serve. We are to serve God...

1. Willingly (Vs. 14a)
 - a. “now therefore” = Joshua’s exhortation based on God’s Revelation. On the basis of God’s goodness and grace, it naturally follows that our response should be one of joyful, willing service.
 - b. The Apostle Paul presents a similar argument in Romans 12:1-2. After unfolding the riches of God’s plan of salvation in chapters 1-11 (Justification, Sanctification, Glorification, Election), he exhorts believers in light of those glorious ‘mercies’ to present their bodies a living sacrifice.
 - c. C.T. Studd: “If Jesus Christ be God, and He died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.”
 - d. David Livingston: “People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? ... Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege...I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father’s throne on high to give Himself for us.”
 - e. Can you look at the nail scarred hands and not be stirred to service for Jesus Christ?
2. Reverently (Vs. 14b)
 - a. “fear the LORD” = reverence, awe and respect
 - b. God is not just concerned about the quantity of our service for Him but also the quality of our service for Him. God is not only concerned with the action of service but also the attitude of service. Let us always remember Who we are serving!
 - c. Hebrews 12:28-29 “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably **with reverence and godly fear**: For our God is a consuming fire.*”

- d. This fear is “not the fear a slave has of a cruel master, but the fear one has lest he hurt a loved one.” (Butler) It is a fear that arises out of an understanding of His goodness (Vs. 1-13).
 - e. John Gill: “Since He has done such great and good things, fear the Lord and His goodness, fear Him for His goodness’ sake nothing so influences fear, or a reverential affection for God, as a sense of His goodness; this engages men sensible of it to fear the Lord, that is, to worship Him both internally and externally in the exercise of every grace, and in the performance of every duty.”
 - f. Illustration: Young lady invited to a dance
3. Honestly (Vs. 14c)
- a. ‘sincerity’ = “honesty of mind or intention; freedom from simulation or hypocrisy.” (Webster)
 - b. ‘truth’ = without error, in accordance with God’s Divine instructions. We are to strive ‘lawfully’ (2 Tim. 2:5).
 - c. Illustration: Ananias and Sapphira examples of the type of hypocritical service that displeases God
4. Purely (Vs. 14d)
- a. “put away the gods” = Joshua knew there were hidden idols in certain homes within the nation of Israel (See Vs. 23). Joshua specifically mentions the idols of their forefathers and the idols of Egypt. The people were now out of Egypt but now Egypt needed to be taken out of the people.
 - b. Remember the significance of Shechem (Vs. 1). It was at this very place over 400 years ago that Jacob had issued a similar charge to his family (Gen. 35:2, 4).
 - c. Challenge: Your god is whatever you put “before” Almighty God (Ex. 20:3). What secret idols do you have at home? What idols of the heart reign in your life? What sinful habit are you holding on to? God wants our whole hearts and will accept no rival!
 - d. Meyer: “...as the clearer light of heaven falls upon us...we come to see the true nature of many things which we had counted innocent, and hugged as dearer than life.”

B. The Choice to Serve (Vs. 15)

- 1. The mandate (Vs. 15a)
 - a. “choose you this day” = Joshua calls for a definite decision on the part of the people of God. He will allow no sitting on the fence, no middle ground. They cannot serve gods and the God at the same time!
 - b. Illustration: Elijah issued a similar demand to Israel in 1 Kings 18:21 *“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”*
- 2. The model (Vs. 15b)

Joshua declares his own resolve as an example to the people of God. Consider...

- a. The Resolve of it – Joshua’s decision would not be influenced by the choices of others. Whether the majority chose truth or not, his mind was made up. He did not wait for the response of the crowd before making his decision. If we are not careful, many of our choices will be made in response to the choices of others (See Christ’s response to Peter’s question in John 21:20-22).
 - i. Illustration: Daniel “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” despite the fact the majority chose compromise (Dan. 1:8)
 - ii. Illustration: We are not called to be thermometers that reflect the spiritual temperature of our surroundings. We are to be thermostats, maintaining the spiritual temperature God requires. Some, like Joash (2 Chr. 24:2), will only serve God when there is a godly influence in their lives.
 - iii. “It is weak to refuse to choose till we see how the world will choose.” (Adeney)
- b. The Reality of it – Joshua is now almost 110 years of age (Vs. 29). These were not empty words for Joshua. He had served God faithfully for over a century.
- c. The Reach of It – for Joshua this commitment was...
 - i. Personal – “as for me” What an example from a man in his sunset years. Elder brothers in Christ, by all means mature but don’t rot! Retire physically but don’t retire spiritually! See Titus 2:2. Illustration: Mr Tweedie Snr’s encouragement during time of trial.
 - ii. Parental – “and my house” By this stage Joshua’s own children are probably grandparents. He children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is almost dead but his vision and resolve for his family is still the same. He wants a family that will be sold out for God and will accept nothing less! Joshua’s godly example had a continuing impact after his death (Vs. 31) Challenge to fathers: God holds US responsible to be the spiritual leaders of our families (See Gen. 18:19; Eph. 5:23).

III. The Admonition Concerning Service (Vs. 16-21)

A. The People’s Willingness (Vs. 16-18)

1. The people understood Joshua’s challenge (Vs. 16-18a). They basically restate in summary form what Joshua has just told them.

2. The people commit to serve the Lord exclusively (Vs. 18b).

B. The Preacher's Warning (Vs. 19-21)

1. "ye cannot serve the LORD"
 - a. Joshua is not saying "ye cannot" in the sense of being forbidden from doing something but in the sense of not being able to do something. Joshua had enough experience to know that good intentions often fail. Joshua had witnessed the commitment of the people of God previously at Sinai where they affirmed "all that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). It wasn't long before they were dancing naked before the golden calf (Ex. 32).
 - b. As important as commitments are, there is no power in the human will to follow through with them as well intentioned as they may be. True godliness can only be produced by the life of Christ working in and through us (Gal. 2:20).
 - c. Keil and Delitzsch: "ye cannot serve the LORD" = "by your own resolution only, and without the assistance of divine grace, without solid and serious conversion from all idols, and without true repentance and faith."
 - d. F.B. Meyer: "Resolution, however good and however strongly expressed, is not sufficient to carry us forward into a life of obedience. Our moral nature has become so weakened by repeated failure that it is not able to resist the appeals of sense. To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. No one can look thoughtfully into the workings of his own nature without realizing the terrible paralysis which has befallen it. The will sits amid the vassals of the inner realm, issuing commands which it is not able to enforce, like a puppet-king in the midst of mighty chiefs who dispute his authority...No; consecration is only possible when it is conceived, prosecuted, and consummated in a power not our own, and in the energy of the Holy Spirit."
2. "he is a holy God; he is a jealous God" = His holiness means those who serve Him must be holy (Lev. 19:2). As a jealous God, He will not accommodate any rival to our devotion (Ex. 20:4-6).
3. "he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" = sin would not be tolerated. Must be read in context. "If they persist in sin there will be no forgiveness. They could not persist in their sin and still serve the Lord." (Butler)

Conclusion:

1. Challenge to lost: Are you saved? You cannot serve the Lord until you first know the Lord.
2. Challenge to dads: Are you sold out for God? Are you leading your family in the ways of God?