

Lesson 50 - WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE *Joshua 24*

(Joshua 24:1) - Joshua was now 110 years old, and these are his last words to Israel. He reminds them of their history and that, even though they had stated their determination to obey the Lord, they would fail. But God had delivered them from their enemies and had given them the land of promise in spite of their disobedience. It was all due to His promise made to Abraham, and it was all for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world according to the flesh. Everything in their history was a testimony to God's unconditional temporal goodness towards them. This was all a picture of the grace of God in the eternal salvation of spiritual Israel through Christ and based on His righteousness (*Isa. 46:9-13*).

(Joshua 24:2-13) - Before God called him, Abraham was an idolater. God chose him to be the human instrument through which the Messiah would come. The Israelites benefited temporally and physically from their physical connection with Abraham. For all who have been brought by God to believe the Gospel, Abraham is a prime example of eternal salvation by God's grace in Christ. Abraham was justified before God based on Christ's righteousness imputed to him and which he received by God-given faith (*Rom. 4; cf. John 8:56*). Sadly, most of the Israelites did not benefit spiritually with Abraham because of their unbelief (*Rom. 2:12-29; 9:1-8*). Their physical connection with Abraham carried on with Isaac, the child of promise, through whom Christ would come (*Gal. 3:16*). Joshua spoke of Jacob and Esau showing how the Lord sovereignly chose Jacob and rejected Esau, not because of their works, but because of His sovereign choice of Jacob (*Rom. 9:10-15*). Paul used this to show how our eternal salvation is not conditioned on our wills or our works but on God's will and work (*Rom. 9:16,30-10:4*).

Joshua spoke of how God appointed Moses and Aaron to bring them out of 400 years of bondage. Moses was the prophet and law-giver; Aaron was the first high priest. Joshua spoke of the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians. Both Moses and Aaron were types of Christ, our great Prophet, Priest, and King, Who has delivered us eternally out of bondage to sin by His death. Christ's blood is the Red Sea of our redemption by God's grace. Joshua spoke of the Lord delivering them from their enemies, a picture of how God not only saves His spiritual children by His grace, but He also preserves us and keeps us safe. Christ will bring us unto glory (*John 6:37-40*).

Joshua spoke of how Balaam tried to curse Israel, but God would not listen and caused Balaam to bless Israel instead. This shows us how God has blessed His true children and, no matter what our enemies say or do, they cannot bring us under God's curse. Christ has been made a curse for us and has redeemed us from the curse of the law (*Gal. 3:10-14*). Joshua spoke of how God brought them across the Jordan River, destroyed Jericho, and defeated other nations for them. He concludes their history with a profound statement showing that all that they possessed was not due to their goodness or works. It was all God's goodness towards them and all God's doing (*Josh. 24:13*). We learn from this that God saves sinners by His grace and power through the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Israel of old, we have no righteousness of our own. We are spiritually dead in sins, and we will not serve the Lord apart from His power and grace to bring us to Himself (*Rom. 3:9-26*). If we are truly saved, it is all of grace from beginning to the final end of glorification, all based on the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. All blessings and benefits of salvation and eternal life are freely given to us in Christ (*Eph. 1:3*).

(Joshua 24:14-15) - Joshua told the people that, in light of what the Lord had done for them, they should "*fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.*" Joshua knew that he himself and all the people were sinners. He knew that the depraved human heart is an idol factory. He knew their only hope was to turn in faith to the Lord and

repent of idolatry. This is the hope of any sinner who is truly saved by grace (*1 Thess. 1:9-10*). Joshua also knew that if left to themselves, they would never choose the true and living God. So, he said to them, “If it seems evil (undesirable) to serve the LORD, then ‘*choose you this day whom ye will serve.*’” Many use this to try to prove that man has a “free will” to choose God over idols. But the Bible teaches us that man’s will is in bondage to sin, and he will not choose God if left to himself. Joshua simply tells them that if they will not serve the Lord, then choose whatever idol they desire. It does not matter which idol, because they are all false gods and lead to eternal damnation and death. Joshua, however, by God’s grace, said, “*as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” Believing in Christ and repenting of dead works is not the product of man’s “free will.” It is the product of God’s grace and power in the new birth (*John 1:11-13*).

(Joshua 24:16-24) - Even though the people promised to serve the Lord, Joshua knew that they would fail. He was not trying to discourage them, but he was simply recognizing the reality of their sin and depravity. He had seen that many times they promised to keep the law and serve the Lord only to turn against the Lord and his prophets when trouble came. Joshua recognized that unless the Lord gives sinners new hearts, they will not believe and serve Him. We who believe in Christ recognize that if God did not give us new hearts, we would not believe and serve Him. God will not share His glory, for He is “*a jealous God.*” Salvation is all of God or not at all. And no matter how a sinner, while on this earth, has received good things from God, unless that sinner is found in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, unless that sinner has God-given faith in Christ, that sinner will perish.

(Joshua 24:25-28) - This is a reaffirmation of the covenant God had already made with them through Moses at Mount Sinai. This stone was a memorial of their pledge to serve the Lord and would serve as a witness against them when they broke God’s covenant. We today need to be so thankful that our salvation and our relationship with God is based on an eternal covenant that we cannot break because it is not conditioned on us. It was (and is) all conditioned on Christ Who fulfilled all of its requirement in our place as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*2 Sam. 23:5; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 13:20-21*).

(Joshua 24:29-32) - Joshua then died and was buried in the land of his inheritance - that which God gave him. Verse 31 tells us that “*Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that HE had done for Israel.*” This probably refers to the very young who came out of Egypt but were now elderly. This is one of the few and brief times in Israel’s history where it could be said that the nation as a whole was in obedience to the Lord according to the terms of the Old Covenant. But it did not last long (*cf. Judges 2:6-15*). Throughout most of the 1500 years of the Old Covenant, as a nation, Israel was disobedient. This is why God purposed to save His people (spiritual Israel) under the terms of a new covenant in Christ (*ex. Jer. 31:31-34*). Here also we are told that the oath Joseph made to be buried in the promised land was fulfilled (*Gen. 50:25; Heb. 11:22*). This was a testimony to Joseph’s faith in the Lord and to God’s faithfulness to keep His promises. The mention of Eleazar’s death meant that another link with the wilderness generation had passed. Phinehas was made high priest. All of this was the Lord’s reminder to the nation that it was HE alone Who had brought them to where they were. In eternal salvation, we remember what the Lord has done through Christ on the cross to save us from our sins. We know that it is the Lord alone Who has brought us into this state of grace and eternal life.