

Joshua 24:14-33

“As for me and my house”

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I. Intro

Of all the battles Joshua fought and all the enemies he defeated I can tell you that if you could ask him which of them was the most difficult he would tell you without hesitation **the idols in his own heart and life**. Friends our greatest enemy, the one that we battle every day for supremacy in our hearts is our own flesh that still covets and longs for the idols of this world. We like Joshua stand now at the gates of this once great nation that was built upon a simple yet profound devotion that was so emblazoned upon the hearts of the people that it was printed upon our currency “**IN GOD WE TRUST**”. For 233 years we the people of this land have heard and watched our God do wonders during seasons where all the elements of the world stood up to oppose us. Now we wonder why before our eyes we see the dismantling of our nation and the answer is simple; **we who are called by His name have failed to live out our devotion and we have each turned aside and served the gods of the enemies we have defeated.** So, let us start here and now and rise up to say, “*I will put away the gods my fathers served*”. Let us with devotion come before our Gracious God and say with all our hearts and beings as Joshua did before his countrymen “*As for me and my house we shall serve the Lord!*”

II. Vs. 14-18 A daily devotion

Vs. 14-15 The “**Therefore**” of verse 14 is Joshua’s response to what the Lord had outlined in the previous 13 verse. The two things that the nation needed to remember to ensure that they stayed in the land of promise:

- A. God’s victories were not man’s achievements: **This wasn’t a payment or reward based upon our work.**
- B. God’s choosing had everything to do with His character and nothing to do with theirs: **This wasn’t rewarded based upon God seeing something worthy in God’s people to bless them.**

No, it was pure and simply an act of unmerited favor (**GRACE**), in which they just simply received from God what they didn’t earn or deserve. “*Fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!*” “***Since the Lord has done great and good things solely because of who He is, reverence Him***”, Joshua says.

Saints one of the leading causes in the body of Christ for an **attitude of entitlement** instead of a **sense of indebtedness** is that we somehow believe we have earned His blessings. Paul told the believers in Rome in Romans 4:4 “*Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.*” I’m afraid that far too often we believers view ourselves as **consumers**. And what we give of our time, talent and treasure is a payment purchasing blessings from God and if they don’t measure up to our expectation we begin to feel that God owes us! In this kind of relationship, it is an employee employer type of thing instead of a loving Father who has lavished His love upon us because He is good. Oh dear ones what we need is to get back to the sense of awe and wonder that David expressed in Psalm 8: 3-5 where he asks, “*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and*

honor.” We ponder the words of Genesis 1:27 where we are told that “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

So, they were to reverence God, but they were also to consider themselves servants by choice towards Him. The story is told of an educated African who was being sold into slavery in Atlanta during the time when England had already outlawed slavery. As the bidding got higher it became apparent that the African was going to be purchased by a wealthy Englishman which angered the African. Sure, enough when the gavel pounded, and the auctioneer’s word said “SOLD” the African was thrown at the Englishman’s feet in shackles. Incensed at the injustice of this the African couldn’t take it and even though he knew he could be beaten or put to death he looked up from the ground at his new owner and said, *“How dare you purchase me here to enslave me when you cannot do so in your own country!”* To which the Englishman lifted up his purchased slave to his feet and said, *“Good sir I have not bought you to enslave you, I have bought you to set you free!”* With tears streaming down his face the African replied, *“Than sir I shall serve you all my life!”* Dear ones that is what we are, **we have been purchased by the Father through the blood of the Son not be enslaved by Him but to be set free by him! Free from sin, free from the bondage to the things of this world, free from the penalty and power of our former life, free to live in His love!** Ah but what response shall we have in light of this revelation? I cannot speak for you, but I can for myself, *“Than Master I shall serve you all my life!”*

Lost in the English translation is the true meaning of Joshua’s statement to the nation when he declared in verse 15 *“choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve....”* The verb tense that Joshua employs here **does not mean** a *“once for all decision”* but rather **a call for a continuous action**, something that the nation would have to do continually choosing this day

and the next and the next and the next and so on! “*Hey saints I have chosen to follow the Lord, I’m choosing to follow the Lord now and I’m going to continue to choose to follow the Lord to the very end*”; how about you? Have you realized that our calling by God requires a continual daily commitment in response, one where we constantly affirm our past choice by making a present one?

Oh, but they were not to just serve Him they were to do so in “*sincerity and in truth*”. The words here speak of “*entire stability*” in other words without wavering. The truest test of our service towards the Lord will not be found during difficult season of hardship and personal conflict as during those times we find nothing else to cling to but the hem of His garment. Ah but will we be unwavering in our commitment towards the Lord during times of ease when the allurements of the world are calling our name relentlessly? Our faithfulness to the Lord is always greater during hardship than it is during a time of prosperity and blessing. Interesting that most of us out our vows during the wedding ceremony promised to be faithful towards our spouse during sickness and health, good times and bad times. I found that I have a greater struggle being faithful to love my wife as Christ loves the church during health and good times than I do during sickness and bad times. This makes Joshua’s words of serving the Lord during their time of blessing all the more important.

Finally, we have insight from Joshua’s words as he says, “*put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord*”. Here is what this statement tells us, these folks were already compromising with worshipping the things that the world worshipped. They weren’t walking their talk as they had in their homes that God had given them the multi breasted god Ashtaroah the god of sexuality, they had in their homes the god of Mammon the god of money. Oh, how patient our heavenly Father is with us as we come

before Him proclaiming our complete devotion to Him and then go back to our homes and play with the idols that the world worships. Do you not hear His words to you and me this day, “*put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side*”? Friends our inability to serve the Lord has more to do with not putting away the gods of our past than we would like to admit.

Notice carefully that Joshua commands them to choose not whether or not they serve but rather who they will serve. Friends we will either serve the gods of this world or we will serve the Lord God. It was this very thought that inspired Bob Dylan’s 1979 hit “*You gotta serve somebody*”. Hey saints we all are responsible for the choice of whom we are going to serve but also notice that Joshua also says, “My house” and as such was acting as the priest of his home and taking responsibility for the direction of what it is they will serve. Joshua in this charge mentions four options for the people with regards to whom they worship:

- A. Vs.14-15: The God’s which your fathers served on the other side of the river: That would have been in the land of Ur where Abraham was from. The **Babylonian** gods Anshar the god of the whole sky, Kishar the god of the whole earth and their offspring. Interesting that what Abraham and his forefathers worshipped was nature and so Joshua says chose if you want to go back and worship nature again.
- B. Vs. 14 The gods which their fathers had worshipped in **Egypt**: These were very different gods than the nature gods as they inhabited people such as Pharaoh and were used largely to describe human characteristics. So here Joshua reverences worshipping man as did the Egyptians.
- C. Vs. 15 The gods of the **Amorites** in whose land they now possessed: The Amorites depicted their gods with human passions and pleasures. So, Joshua tells them you can choose to worship your fleshly passions like the Amorites.
- D. Vs. 14-14 The Lord the **true and living God**: He is not in nature as He created everything, He is not a man as the fifth LDS President Lorenzo Snow in June of 1840 declared, “*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become*”, He created man. And He is not enslaved to our passion and pleasures.

In Paul’s statement to the church in Rome in Romans 1:22-23 he declares the outcome of those who do not glorify God will “*became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*”

What is interesting to note is we can see this exact progression in the American auto industry.

When cars were first manufactured they were given the names of those who started building them, Henry **Ford**, Wallace and William **Dodge**, Louis and Joseph **Chevrolet**, Walter **Chrysler**; Ah, the image of corruptible man. Then from there the names changed to **Hawk, Falcon, Firebird, and Thunderbird**. Then that changed into four footed things like **Ram, Mustang, Impala, and Cougar**. So, we see the progression into birds and four-footed animals. Now finally into creepy things, **bugs, spiders, stingray, gremlin**.

Friends there is no neutrality in our life towards the Lord, no halfway commitment we are either all in or we are all out. Here Joshua tells them that they may think that they are all in but the fact that they still were serving the gods of this world ought to have been an indicator that they weren't where they ought to be. Joshua's call was not to become religious it was rather to drop that all together and go after their relationship. All of us need to continually evaluate our decision to follow Jesus to see if we are walking our talk or only giving lip service to it.

Vs. 16-18 Joshua knew that all this talk about following the Lord was nothing more than (pardon the pun) **idle conversation**. They claimed that they weren't going to serve other god's but back at home on the bookshelves, hanging on the wall, in the cupboard were idols. Did you notice that the nation makes their commitment based upon what the Lord had done for them in the past? As wonderful recognition as this is it fall far short of a motivation for continual service. Here's why, it places our commitment to God upon our recognition of God's faithfulness meeting our expectations. Simply put the determining factor to our obedience is now based upon our comprehension of His working in our lives rather than His stated nature and character. Many a life has become derailed simply because at some point we began to believe that God was no longer working in our best interest. A great caser in point is this very section of scripture as you will recall in verse 14 Joshua tells them to put away the gods their forefathers served, then they

proclaim in verses 16-18 that would never forsake the Lord who has done so much for them, only to hear Joshua again reiterate that they cannot serve the Lord because they are still involved in serving the gods of the world. These folks were not able to see that they were proclaiming loyalty because of God's grace all the while serving the pleasures of the world.

Dear ones, God doesn't want idle chatter from us He wants our devoted hearts. I've been married almost 30 years and I know my wife's response to me dating other women, "Even if I said that I loved her most, my favorite." No, she wants a devoted heart from me and so too does our Lord as He has a devoted heart towards you. Guard your hearts from idols friends and I'm not talking about statues in you homes I'm talking about the things that stir your passions, consume your time and attention as you can only have one person on the throne of your heart.

III. Vs. 19-28 A Stone will speak

Vs. 19-28 It is interesting to note that Moses appointed a successor according to the word of the Lord, but Joshua wasn't told to do so. Instead the Leaders of the nation were to function in this capacity. Yet with that said these men failed in their devotion to the Lord and nation went astray eventually worshipping the gods of the nations they had defeated. "*Fellows*", Joshua says, "*You cannot serve two masters*". There are far too many times in my life where I've played church like a little child plays house and it is this that Joshua warns the nation against. So, Joshua warns them and tells them the consequences of partial obedience and they respond by "We will serve the Lord". Then there was this ceremony sealed with the commitment in a book over seen by a "large stone". Why a large stone? Hey, you remember the scene in Luke 19 where Jesus entered Jerusalem and the crowds cried out Hosanna and the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd saying, "*Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.*" Then we are told that Jesus answered and said to them, "*I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.*" So, Joshua's

words come full circle as a testimony against those who tried silence those who wanted to serve the Lord and Jesus says those stones will be talking as a witness that you all promised to serve the Lord.

Back in Exodus 19:8 prior to the reading of the law the nation declared “*All that the Lord has spoken we will do*” then only 40 days later they were dancing in front of the golden calf. I have found in my life that a **verbal decision** is always easier than a **daily devotion!** And as much as my heart may mean what I say with regards to my commitment like Peter I may say to Jesus, “*Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.*” (Matthew 26:33) If my commitment is based upon my anything I soon will be denying Him. Folk’s, rededication to the Lord is a wonderful thing that I try to practice daily a time where I go before the Lord and confess that I’ve fallen from walking as near as He wants me too. You may be thinking, “I thought rededication to the Lord should only happen after you have fallen away from Him”. Yep, I today already I’ve fallen away from his love some many times I’ve lost count so I keep practicing what the apostle John spoke of in 1 John 1:9 where we are told “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” So that is my daily dose of rededication.

Joshua tells them if you are truly serious about following the Lord you are going to have to get rid of your idols. Saints what we really are is what we are privately where no one’s knows or sees that is who you really are. So, let me ask again to have you put away those idols that you have stashed in the dark places of your heart where no one can see them?

IV. Vs. 29-33 Actions that speak louder than words

Vs. 29-31 Hey folks what a godly influence of Joshua who we are told that as long as he remained alive he had a preserving nature upon the nation as we are told that they served the

Lord all the days of Joshua. He was buried on the border of his inheritance in a city that means “portion” on the mount called Ephraim which means “double portion” on the north side of the hill that means “earthquake”. Hey folks I believe that Joshua would have had it no other way. Buried on the border of his inheritance because it was a sign to the nation to keep going forward in the promises of the Lord and it spoke of the fact that as far as he was concerned he had gone after “every spiritual blessing”. In a city that means “portion” on a mount that means “double portion” on a hill that means earthquake. Hum, the city you will recall was one that his kinsmen no doubt thought was worthless just a portion but Joshua saw it as a “double portion” and he was going to one day bust out of this double portion and into the very presence of the Lord who so blessed him.

All of our life is made up of many events, so how do you view them? Are you excited about the portion the Lord has allotted to you? Oh, dear ones Joshua saw what other would call a fault line as a double portion of blessings and spent his life going after more of the Lord, so how about you?

Vs. 32-33 There is an epilogue to this story here and it doesn't deal with Joshua but it does deal with a promise made to Joseph back in Genesis 50:25 where Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “*God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.*” So, for 450 years they carried Joseph's around with them until they finally laid them to rest in the place purchased by Jacob all those years ago. Friends there are many promises that may seem to be unfilled, but rest assured one day we will see that God never broke a single promise and that the enjoyment of them did not lie in our physical apprehension of them but in our apprehension of them by faith. We are also told that Eleazar the High priest died and was replaced by his son Phinehas and with him another link to God work through that generation.

Someday my friends we too shall pass the torch to a new generation and what they have seen of the greatness of God in our lives will be what they will use to press further into the inheritance and promises of God.