

LESSON 12



JOSHUA'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

Scripture Text: Joshua 23

Joshua, in his final message, warns Israel not to come among the heathen or to mention the names of their idols. Why? Because each would be a first step in a wrong path. First steps lead to second, and so on. Jesus taught us to pray to be led away from temptation. Do we have anything to do in avoiding temptation? We are told to **shun profane and vain babblings** because they **increase unto more ungodliness** (2 Timothy 2:16). In the lesson today, we find the secret of how to avoid falling from holiness.

God was faithful to Israel and is faithful to us. Israel was warned, and we are warned of the tragedy of turning from the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: *Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.—Joshua 23:11*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Proverbs 3:1-12 Blessings in acknowledging God.

Tue.—Deuteronomy 10:11-22 God's great requirement.

Wed.—Genesis 28:10-22 Jacob sets up a witness of stone.

Thu.—1 Corinthians 11:23-34 A witness to Christ's death.

Fri.—1 Chronicles 16:7-36 David's praise to God.

Devotional Reading: Joshua 22:10-34 An altar for a witness.

Joshua Calls Israel Together

Joshua 23:1-5 Israel was settled in Canaan and was at peace, comparatively speaking. Joshua was old, probably close to one hundred ten years. His leadership of Israel would soon come to an end. To give them a last message of encouragement and warning, he called the leaders together. He called them before God one last time. They felt His eyes upon them and heard Joshua's words as the Word of God. They remembered their covenant with God. It is good to remember that we are always before God. Joshua reminded them of how the Lord had driven out the nations before them and given them the land. It was not by their strength, **for the Lord . . . hath fought for you**. He reminded Israel that the Lord had promised that He was not done yet. He would **expel them . . . and drive them from out of your sight**.

Cleave to the Lord

Joshua 23:6-8 **Be ye therefore**—because of God's power and faithfulness—**very courageous** to obey Him exactly. Be careful not to mingle with the heathen still in Canaan, for they worshiped false gods. Israel must not (1) **make mention of the name** of idols—to recognize them, nor (2) **cause to swear by them**—to use their names in oaths, which would credit them with power, nor (3) **neither serve them**—by ceremonies and rites, giving honor to them, nor (4) to **bow yourselves unto them**—thus submitting to their authority. Each of these would be taking

something due to God and giving it to a lifeless idol—one of the greatest of sins. **Cleave unto the Lord**—here Joshua gave the only safeguard from falling into these sins.

Why must Israel not come among the heathen nor partake of any of their ways? Because this would be a first step in the wrong direction, the first step down a path that would lead to a condition in which the love of their God would be turned into His wrath. The first step is the one that always leads down, down, down away from God's blessings. It leads to a place where we have none of God's promises to stand on.

He Gave Promises

Joshua 23:9-11 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God . . . fighteth for you, as he hath promised you. The Lord would continue to give Israel complete victory over enemy nations. In His strength they would be strong. But it was conditional, as are all of God's promises. The condition was that they be very careful to **love the Lord**.

Joshua told the people how to enjoy God's promises and avoid His punishments. He told how to continue living in this good land and avoid being removed from it and destroyed. It all depended on their relationship with God. All of Israel's history was shaped by their relationship with God. There has never been a nation whose prosperity, both spiritual and material, did not rise or fall exactly according to its relationship with God. Our nation's future rests in the hands of the saints. We have no other safeguard against any evil but to cleave unto the Lord in love and obedience.

He Gave Warnings

Joshua 23:12-15 Should Israel turn from God, mingle and marry with the heathens, they would suffer the natural consequences. The heathen would be permanent companions, for God would no longer drive them out. They would be **snare . . . traps . . . scourges and thorns** to them, dragging them downward, bringing trouble and sorrow. Finally, Israel would **perish from off the land**—be taken away from this precious gift which God had given them. **Know for a certainty**—this was the sure Word of the Lord. As God had kept all His promises, He would surely fulfill His threatenings. **Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God** (Romans 11:22).

Throughout the whole message, Joshua emphasizes the necessity for spiritual loyalty and faith. He regards compromise as a dangerous element to moral character. The people are not to contaminate themselves either by associating with Canaanite people or by paying any attention whatsoever to the idolatrous practices of these people.

Joshua had no new message to give the people. He only reminded them of the old paths. He warned them against intermarriage with the heathen. He realized that there could be neither peace, morality, nor a sense of security in a family where the members of which differed in their religious faith.

We should be deeply conscious that the root of all happiness for us, for our nation, and for the world depends upon our behaving as obedient children under the Fatherhood of a righteous God.

JUST A THOUGHT

All we can do for God is what He can do through us.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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