

Joshua 23:1-16**Joshua's Farewell to the Leaders**

23 After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, ² summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am very old. ³ You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you. ⁴ Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵ The Lord your God himself will push them out for your sake. He will drive them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you.

⁶ “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷ Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸ But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.

⁹ “The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰ One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹ So be very careful to love the Lord your God.

¹² “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³ then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.

¹⁴ “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. ¹⁵ But just as all the good things the Lord your God has promised you have come to you, so he will bring on you all the evil things he has threatened, until the Lord your God has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. ¹⁶ If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve

other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you."

John 15:1-10

The Vine and the Branches

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

I encourage to have your **Bibles opened** up at **Joshua chapter 23** to begin with

Let's pray...

Intro

A **question** to begin with....

[Slide-Question]

What **spiritual legacy** would you like to leave?

[Slide-Graham]

Billy Graham

“My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God, which, I believe, comes through knowing Jesus.”

[Slide-Apostle Paul]

Apostle Paul

“I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” (Acts 20:24)

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)

The Apostle Paul finished well - spiritually

How will we finish our life - spiritually?

Perhaps we can learn from our OT reading from Joshua 23 and from our NT reading from John 15.

[Please turn to Joshua 23 in your Bibles]

1st point – **Joshua Encourages Israel to Finish Well**

[Slide-Heading]

Joshua encourages Israel to Finish Well (Joshua 23)

We pick up the story in vv1-2 –where a long time has passed since the Israelites occupied the land – and God has given them rest.

Now Joshua is **very old**

According to chapter 24:29 he is **110 years old**.

So that means we're not "very old" yet – just old!

Joshua knew he was nearing the end of his life, so he gathered Israel's leaders to give them his spiritual wishes for the future. It raises an important question for us...

Have we thought about expressing our spiritual wishes to our family and friends before we die?

Do our family and friends know how important our faith in Jesus is to us?

Here's what Joshua shared...

[Slide-Remember God]

1st - Remember what God has done for you Israel

- God fought for Israel and removed the nations occupying the land (v3)
- God allotted land to every tribe in Israel as an inheritance (v4)
- And God will continue to be with the Israelites to drive out the nations that remain – as the Israelites take full possession of the land (v5)

We too – should remember what God has done for us

- Through His Son Jesus' death we have forgiveness of our sins

- Through His Son Jesus' resurrection we have eternal life
- And because of Jesus - the power of sin, death and Satan has been defeated
– and Jesus has given us an inheritance in Heaven which cannot spoil or fade!

[Slide-Faithful obedience]

Next – Joshua – **called the Israelites to faithful obedience**

See v6 - *Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left.*

This is what God told Joshua – many years earlier before the Israelites even entered the Promised Land - back in chapter 1 verse 7. And now at the end of his life – Joshua realizes that this is the only way to live – living a faithful obedient life that pleases God – not a life - pleasing ourselves or others! Joshua wants to pass this message of faithful obedience on to the next generation.

What about us?

It takes great strength of character to faithfully obey God's law – there are so many temptations or distractions in this world – which can have us turning to the left or right of God's Law – and before we know it – we've compromised! For example – we exaggerate, we stretch the truth – we tell a lie – then tell another lie to cover up the first one!

Or - we become too busy to pray and spend time with God – then without realizing - God is not our first priority anyone - but our last resort!

A ship doesn't have to turn 90 degrees to miss its destination. **A tiny change in direction, maintained over a long journey, can take a ship way of course!**

Likewise a small turn to the left or right of God's law – can take us totally down the wrong path!

[Slide-associating]

Next – vv7-8 - Joshua **warns the Israelites against associating with the nations still remaining in the land – who worship false gods and idols.**

The danger is the Israelites will start worshipping these false gods/idols – and calling upon their name instead of YHWH the one true God.

To counter this - Joshua says they are to “**hold fast**” to the Lord their God.

The Hebrew word for “hold-fast” (דָּבַק) [dabaq] means stick closely to God – like being **superglued** to Him. It's the same Hebrew Word used in Genesis 2:4 – for marriage when “*A man is to leave his father and mother and is united to his wife, and become one flesh*”

The idea is we are to be completely at ONE with God – it's wholehearted faithful obedience and loyalty to Him alone!

It begs the question what do we do when we come across non-believers or believers of other religions – like Islam, Hindu, Buddhism and so on?

It's not possible to share our faith in Jesus with them if we totally ignore them.

We are to engage with them and share the Good News of Jesus – but we don't accept their version of faith – or join in with it. We find common ground to start a conversation but we don't compromise on what we believe nor accept what they believe.

The question for us is: will we hold fast to God – or will we compromise with the patterns of this world?

The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 12:1-2 - *in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

[Slide-Battle]

Next – Joshua – **reminds the Israelites that the Battle Belongs to the Lord – vv9-11**

Joshua reminds the Israelites that it was God who drove out these powerful nations from the land of Canaan – and no-one could withstand the Israelites because of their God! The Israelites even experienced miraculous victories because God fought for them. Remember the walls of Jericho!

So v11 – Joshua warns them to be very careful to love the Lord their God! The implication is – if they stop loving God – God will not fight for them!

For us – we can be confident God fights for us!

The Apostle Paul reminds us – *“if God is for us, who can be against us”* (Romans 8:31)

Jesus says *“He will be with us until the end of the age”* – through the Holy Spirit – He sent to us (Matthew 28:20)

And Paul also reminds us “*the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

And God promises to “*never leave us, nor forsake us*” (Hebrews 13:5)

You see – the Israelites’ real enemy and our real enemy – is the spiritual battle we have *against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

(Ephesians 6:12)

And praise God – He has given us His full armour to put on – so that - *when the day of evil comes, we may be able to stand our ground* (Ephesians 6:13)

God’s armour consists of:

- The **belt of truth** – Jesus is God’s truth because Jesus is the Word of God. And if we stand with Him – we are on the side of truth!
- The **breastplate of righteousness** – tells us we are right with God because we believe in Jesus
- Our **feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of Peace** – the Gospel Good News - is our firm foundation which we can stand upon
- The **shield of faith – a full body shield** – it’s our faith in Jesus - that stops Satan’s flaming arrows that come our way!
- Then there’s the **helmet of salvation** – which reminds us we are saved for Heaven. We need this protection because it’s inside our heads that fears and doubts occur – and the helmet reminds us – we belong to Jesus – and nothing can snatch us from His hands!

Please don't underestimate this spiritual battle or the attacks from Satan. They are real. I can vouch for that first hand! These attacks have got more intense for me - in the last year or two – to the point that I pray each day for God to protect me – and I visualize putting His armour on for protection! If I were to give up ministry – these attacks would stop for sure – because I wouldn't be annoying Satan – but I'm NOT going to give up – Satan is a defeated enemy – He causes havoc alright - but He is defeated and He will not get a foothold!

And there's one more part of the armour – which is an offensive weapon for this spiritual battle.

And it's **praying in the Spirit** – so we must keep on praying for each other! Our prayers are the instrument God has given to bring about His will. Haven't we noticed in this book of Joshua that when Joshua and the Israelites don't pray and don't consult God – things go badly? But when they do pray and do consult God – things go well!

In fact that's what Joshua warns in vv12-13 – if the Israelites turn away and ally with the survivors of these nations that remain in Canaan – and if they intermarry with them – then God will no longer fight for them – and these remaining nations will corrupt the Israelites.

Unfortunately – Israel's subsequent history, in the centuries following Joshua's time, shows that they did not heed Joshua's warning. Again and again they turned away from God.

I pray we do a better job of heeding these warnings than Israel did – and that we hold fast to God – knowing the battle belongs to Him!

[Slide-Promises]

Next – Joshua – **reminds the Israelites God ALWAYS Keeps His Promises** – v14

Joshua says - v14 – *“You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”*

And God’s promises also relate to us to because as we learnt a couple of weeks ago – from 2 Corinthians 1:20 - *no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

Every promise of God finds its ‘Yes’ and ‘Amen’ in Jesus. God promised a Saviour, and He sent Jesus. And because God kept that promise, we can trust every promise God has made—including Jesus’ promise to return one day.

[Slide-covenant]

Then Joshua ends his spiritual farewell with a final warning – in vv15-16 – that **His covenant agreement with them – requires obedience**. If they obey God – they will be blessed. But if they disobey God’s covenant and serve other gods – they will perish.

This is a theme of Joshua and the OT – **blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.**

And as we know from Israel’s history – far too often they took the disobedience option!

For us – praise God – in His grace and mercy – we have Jesus who is perfectly obedient and faithfully and perfectly obeyed ALL of God’s commandments – and because of Him – we have a new covenant in His blood shed on the cross [Luke

22:20) – and so Jesus has removed any curse we have for sinning and breaking God's law! [Gal 3:13]

When we genuinely repent of our sins – we are forgiven (1 John 1:9)

However, our sinful actions may still leave us with consequences we have to live with!

Joshua's farewell spiritual address to Israel leads us nicely to Jesus' farewell spiritual address to His disciples – in our NT reading from John 15

[\[Please turn there now\]](#)

[Slide-John 15]

Jesus Encourages His Disciples to Finish Well (John 15:1-10)

The context is that in the previous chapter John 14

Jesus has told His disciples He is about to die on a cruel cross – but they are not to be troubled about this. It is all part of God's plan.

Jesus says He is going ahead to prepare a place for them in Heaven – so they and we – can live forever in Heaven.

Jesus' farewell to His disciples continues here in John 15.

Knowing they will face trouble, persecution and temptation, Jesus gives them the key to finishing well by remaining in Him!

He uses the analogy

[Slide-Vine]

Where Jesus = a vine – the true vine

We believers = the branches attached to the vine

God the Father = the gardener

[Slide-Gardener]

God the Father, the gardener, cuts off any branches that don't bear fruit

[Slide- Pruned]

God the Father, the gardener – may from time to time – prune the branches – and get rid of the rebellious bits of our lives – and once we are pruned – we can be even more fruitful.

Jesus reminds the disciples – v3 – they are spiritually cleansed – because they have believed the words He has spoken.

[Slide-Fruit]

The Branches – us believers – bear fruit – if they remained attached to Jesus the Vine

Just like Joshua told the Israelites to “hold fast to God” – and we said that that was like being superglued to God. In the same way, we too must stay superglued to Jesus

[Slide-Apart from Jesus]

In fact – Jesus says emphatically in v4 – we can't bear fruit without Him – and in v5 – Apart from Jesus we can do NOTHING of any spiritual good whatsoever!

And like Joshua there is a warning – if we don't remain attached to Jesus the vine – we will be broken branches – which are picked up and thrown into a fire – a picture of Hell. If we don't remain attached to Jesus – we wind up in Hell. If we remain attached we will produce fruit for His Kingdom.

What is the fruit we produce?

[Slide-Fruit]

The fruit is telling more and more people about the Good News of Jesus – and inviting people to attach to Jesus – the vine!

Remaining attached to Jesus – also means bringing glory to God (v8) by bearing fruit.

[Slide-Fruit]

And bearing fruit looks like remaining in His love and keeping His commandments.

A good question to ask ourselves is...

WWJD?

Our Response – What Spiritual Legacy would you like to leave?

So how do we finish well?

We remain in Jesus – superglued to Him.

We obey His Word.

We pray.

We stand firm in the spiritual battle.

And we pass our faith on to the next generation.

[Slide-Question]

And that brings us back to our opening question:

What spiritual legacy would you like to leave?

What's your response?

Here's my response:

I would like my family and friends to remember that I was a man of prayer, that I loved Jesus, and that I loved God's Word.

*I would like them to remember me as someone who followed Jesus and who had **FOPMOH — a fear of people missing out on Heaven**. I want them to remember that I sought to show the love of Jesus to everyone, praying and hoping that, through my words and actions, they too might come to know Jesus and follow Him.*

Most of all, I want my family to remember that the most important thing in life is to believe in Jesus — that His death brings forgiveness for our sins, and that His resurrection gives eternal life to all who put their trust in Him.

I want my family and friends to know that I was unashamed of the Gospel of Jesus — the truth that changed my life. I want them to remember that I lived my faith out loud, that I stood my ground for Jesus, and that I was never ashamed of the One who took my shame upon Himself.

I would also like my family to understand how important it is to raise their children to know, love and follow Jesus, so that each generation may hear the good news of the Gospel, place their faith in Him, and continue to pass that faith on to the next generation.

If that is the legacy I leave behind, then I will have left behind what matters most.

Perhaps my family could read this at my funeral.

I challenge you to finish well – and let your family know your spiritual wishes!

Let's pray..

Heavenly Father thank you for the Good News that Jesus has defeated sin, death and Satan. Help us to remain attached to Jesus, the Vine. Help us to bear fruit for your Kingdom by being faithful witnesses for Jesus. Help us to finish life spiritually well and leave a legacy of the love of Jesus to our family and friends. In Jesus Name. Amen.