

(Through the Bible) Joshua 17-24

by Chuck Smith

In this sermon, Chuck Smith explores the themes of spiritual inheritance, the importance of claiming victory over sin, and the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises to Israel.

Duration: 1:24:35

Topics: "Faithfulness To God", "Conquest Of Promised"

Description

In this sermon, Joshua, an old and faithful servant of God, gathers the tribes of Israel to deliver a final charge. He reminds them of God's goodness and faithfulness throughout their history, including the deliverance of their ancestors from idolatry and the conquest of the Promised Land. Joshua urges the people to remain faithful to God's commandments and not turn to the gods of the nations around them. He warns that if they forsake God and serve other gods, they will face the anger and destruction of the Lord. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about the speaker's own experience of trusting in God and the importance of using wisdom in our faith.

Transcript

Let's turn now to Joshua, chapter 17, as we begin our study this evening. As we get into the 17th chapter, we find that the land is continued to be divided by Joshua, and the portion that was to be given to a half of the tribe of Manasseh. Now, Manasseh took part of its inheritance on the other side of the Jordan River.

A half of the tribe, and the other half was to settle on the western bank, and what is actually the west bank today in the land of Israel. A part of that did belong to Manasseh at the time of the dividing of the land. When we get down to verse 12, we read again of the failure of the children of Israel to completely drive out the enemy.

Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities, but the Canaanites would dwell in the land. Yet it came to pass when the children of Israel were stronger that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but they did not utterly drive them out. This was a failure on the part of the children of Israel to enter into the complete victory and the complete conquering of the land.

Now, we have pointed out to you in the past how that the whole experience of the children of Israel coming out of the bondage of Egypt, passing through the wilderness, coming into the promised land, is a spiritual allegory. And it is representative of we as Christians coming out of Egypt, the bondage in sin. The Red Sea is equivalent to our baptism.

Coming into a new relationship with God. And how that God has promised unto us a life of victory over our flesh. Coming into the land of promise is actually representative of coming into the walk and the life of the Spirit that God wants each of you to experience and to know.

And He desires that we take full victory over every area that the enemy has had a stronghold in our lives. And if we allow any of these strongholds of the enemy to remain, they are going to be a continual and constant problem to you in your spiritual growth and development. Now, many of these areas of our flesh, maybe it is a bad temper, maybe it is anger, maybe it is other types of characteristics, pride or whatever, that you have to deal with in your life.

Now, God wants to give you complete and full victory over these areas of your flesh. He has provided all that you need. But many times, even as the children of Israel failed to utterly drive out the enemies, but yet in time to come, their failure to drive out the enemy utterly worked to their own disadvantage.

So many times in our own lives where we failed to enter into the full victory, that that very area where we haven't really gone in and laid claim to our victory in Christ is the very area where we find ourselves attacked by Satan in the future and oftentimes defeated in the future because we failed to fully take the promise that God has given to us and laid claim to the full victory that we can have as we walk in the Spirit. So, the failure of complete victory is one of the sad, tragic bites, little notes of Joshua all the way through. You see that they did not utterly drive out the inhabitants, that they did not take fully the land, that they did not conquer all that God had given and it later on worked to their own harm.

So, let us not follow after the same example, but let us, in pressing into our walk in the Spirit, enter into the fullness. I was talking with a group of ministers yesterday from Germany that were visiting here, some 60 Lutheran ministers from Germany. And I told them that I desire to be totally open to God for all that God has for my life.

I don't want to close any doors to God by my presuppositions, by my theological background or training. I don't want to have any closed doors to God. I want to be totally open for whatever God might have in mind for me, for my life.

Because, number one, I need every bit of help I can get. And thus, I don't want to fall short of anything that God may have for me. I want to be open to it.

I want to always have a total openness when I approach God. God, whatever you have in mind, whatever, Lord, you have there to give to me, Lord, I desire it, I need it, I want it. I feel sorry for many people who have such a concept of God that they can't open themselves totally up to God.

But they put the limitations. Now, God, I really don't want this. Lord, I don't need that.

And they'll put limitations on God as though God is going to give to me something that is not going to really be a benefit or blessing to me. I don't want to put any kind of strings upon what God might want to do for my life, in my life, or through my life. I want to be totally open before God in all things.

And so, I want to gain every victory that God has for me. I want to possess all of the promises that God has given to me. I want to claim the whole land.

Why should I come short of the fullness that God wants to work in my life? Why should I stop short when God is urging me to go on? Why should I allow or tolerate an area of my flesh that is still not committed to

the Spirit and under the control of the Spirit? Why should I set up a peaceful coexistence with some weakness of my own flesh? I desire to know the full, complete victory of Jesus Christ in every area of my life. And I want to keep pressing on and laying claim until I have conquered through Christ all that has been promised to me. God laid out the borders and I don't want to come short of anything that God has for me.

But the children of Israel tragically did. They did not conquer all of the land. They left pockets of the enemies within the land.

When they became stronger, rather than driving them out, they just taxed them and made slaves of them. But there was a failure. Verse 14, the children of Joseph spake to Joshua saying, Why hast Thou given us but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing that we are a great people forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me hitherto? Now, Ephraim and Manasseh were two of the larger tribes and they were the sons of Joseph.

So when it refers here to the tribe of Joseph, it is actually referring to the double tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. And because they had so many, they said, Why have you just given us one lot? We really are so big, we should have two lots. That is, in the casting of lots, they divided off the land, they made a map and divided off the map and then they would cast lots to who gets this portion.

And they said, We've got so many people, we really need two lots for the tribe of Joseph. And so, Joshua agreed to it that there should be two lots given to them. And so they drew another lot so that Manasseh was dwelling next to Ephraim on the west bank and the other part of Manasseh, of course, was over on the east bank on the other side of the Jordan River.

As we get into chapter 18, we find that the tabernacle was then set up at Shiloh. Now the tabernacle, the place of the worship of God, which was with them there in the wilderness and wherever they would go, they would set up the tabernacle. It was the place where they would offer their sacrifices unto God.

They were not allowed to offer sacrifices to God just any place. Only one place could they really make an offering unto God, a sacrifice, and that was at the tabernacle. And so, now that they are in the land, the first place where the tabernacle was set up within the land was at Shiloh.

So this is the place for the spiritual gathering together of the people. It would seem that the capital, if there were such a thing at that time, was probably in Shechem. But the spiritual center of the people was at Shiloh.

That is where they set up the tabernacle and thus the offering of the sacrifices, the institution of the offerings, the priesthood and so forth was made there at Shiloh. Now, at this point, there remained seven tribes that had not yet received their inheritance. Only three of the tribes by this point had actually received the territory that belonged to them.

And so they chose three men from each of these tribes that they might go into this territory as a survey team and more or less mark out the territory, draw out the boundaries, and usually the boundaries were by cities and rivers and valleys and mountains and so forth, so that they could draw out the boundaries of the territories that the tribes were to receive. And so, in the 18th chapter, it deals with the drawing of the boundaries and then of the casting of the lots for the various tribes. And in verse 11, the lot of the tribe of Benjamin came up according to their families and the lot of the tribe of Judah and the children of Judah.

And Benjamin was to dwell right there actually around the area of Jerusalem and north of that a narrow strip that went from Jordan on up through Bethel. As you get into the 19th chapter, the second lot came forth and it was for the tribe of Simeon. And Simeon became the southernmost tribe in Israel.

The area down around Kadesh Barnea and desert area, a vast desert area, Beersheba and up almost to Hebron, but that whole southern part was the lot that Simeon received. Now, if you were of the tribe of Simeon, you may have thought that you got a bum deal because it's pretty much desert and wilderness area down there, but there is one nice advantage. It's sure nice in the winter time.

It's sort of like Palm Springs in the winter time. And when we go over to Israel now, if we have a day, say, planned to tour through Jerusalem, we wake up in the morning and it's cold and raining, we'll head down to Beersheba and we'll take the tour through Beersheba because it's always so nice and beautiful and warm down there in the winter time. And so we sort of, when we're over there, remain flexible according to the weather we tour.

And when the days are nice in Jerusalem, then we tour Jerusalem. If the weather gets bad there, we can always know that we can go down to Beersheba and find great weather because you only get a little more than an inch of rain in that area down there. You know, we go to Masada and Beersheba and it makes a neat day of it.

But it is pretty desolate, pretty barren. It was up until, of course, just recently in the redevelopment of the land. The Jews have channeled now the Jordan River and up above or up at the area of the Galilee and they have brought the Jordan River all the way down to this vast area and now the thing is like San Joaquin Valley or Imperial Valley.

It's really a tremendous farm area down there because of the irrigation now that they have developed through the water from the Sea of Galilee. The third lot in verse 10 came up for the children of Zebulun and they received the area of the Valley of Megiddo and up in that area up there. So, Zebulun was in that vast valley that goes from Hypha on back towards Mount Gilboa.

The fourth lot came up and it was to the tribe of Issachar in verse 17 and they received the area south of the Sea of Galilee. The fifth lot came out for the children of Asher in verse 24 and they received that beautiful coastal area from Hypha on up to Sidon. So, the area that includes Akko and that neat beautiful area along the Mediterranean.

An extremely beautiful area. In the 32nd verse, the sixth lot came out for Naphtali and they received the area around the Sea of Galilee. And really, here's one area I wouldn't mind living at all.

The Sea of Galilee is one of the most beautiful places. I love this. I can understand why Jesus spent most of His ministry at the Sea of Galilee.

It's almost equivalent to spending your ministry in Hawaii or something. It's just a neat, beautiful area. And even to the present time, it is not really highly developed.

And, boy, if you had a house there on the Sea of Galilee with a ski boat, oh, could you ever have a fabulous setup. It's just so beautiful. And this was given to the tribe of Naphtali.

So, there is always, of course, the farming on the hillsides around the Sea of Galilee. Good water supply. And just a beautiful place indeed.

And the weather is quite nice there. It does get warm in the summertime. But you are 600 feet below sea level.

And so, in that pocket, it stays pretty warm, but it is tremendously fertile land and great agricultural area. The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan in verse 40. And Dan was given the area known as the Hula Valley, which is the upper Jordan before it gets to the Sea of Galilee.

And it is that valley with the Golan on the right and the Lebanese Mountains on the left. And they went clear on up to the Mount Hermon area. In fact, the city of Dan is just, oh, three miles from the base of Mount Hermon.

And you're in the foothills there. The city of Dan, again, was just a fabulously beautiful city because you have this beautiful river coming by. And you've never seen anything in Hawaii that is any more beautiful than the sites around what they call Tel Dan or the ruins of the city of Dan over there.

So, the upper Jordan River area, the Hula Valley, was given unto Dan. Now, verse 49, when they had made an end of dividing the land for the inheritance by their coast, the children of Israel gave an inheritance unto Joshua. And according to the word of the Lord, they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath Sarah, in Mount Ephraim.

And he built the city and dwelt there. And these are the inheritances which Eliezer the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided for an inheritance. So, they divided out the land and they finally gave a city to Joshua inasmuch as he was the leader in the area of Mount Ephraim, which means that it was in the area in the center part of the land where the ancient city of Samaria or Shechem, it's in that general area, was known as Mount Ephraim.

An area that is beautiful with the many, many fruit trees, the terraced hillsides, and the fertile valleys. It's right in the heart of the land and a beautiful place indeed. Now, in the 20th chapter, you remember that when they came into the land, they were to establish cities of refuge so that anybody who had killed someone accidentally, who had not had a foremalice or hated towards the person, but killed them accidentally, they could flee to the city of refuge from the avenger of death.

Now, we talked to you about the culture of revenge killing. It was quite a deeply ingrained cultural practice. It is still practiced today in New Guinea and in some of the more primitive areas.

Revenge killing. And it doesn't matter if they killed your son by accident. If they killed a member of your family, then you were duty-bound to kill them.

Or if you couldn't catch them to kill a member of their family. So, in these days, because there were cases where a person would accidentally kill someone else, or he didn't have any hatred or malice against them, but it was just purely an accident. In order to be fair, in order to be just, God had them establish six cities that they called the cities of refuge where you could flee and be safe from the avenger of blood.

Three on either side of the Jordan River. They were so located in the land that you were never more than a half day's run from one of these cities. And you would be running, to be sure.

So, as we look at the cities of refuge that were appointed within the land, we find the first one was in the Galilee region, the upper part of the land in Kadesh, which was up in the Galilee region. The second one was right in the southern part of the land in Hebron, which is down in the southernmost section. And then

the third was at Shechem, which was right in the heart of the land.

So, really in sort of the middle area of the south in Hebron, in the heart of the land in Shechem, and then up in the Galilee region in Kadesh, the three cities of refuge were established that a person guilty of killing someone accidentally could flee and be protected until he had at least a fair trial. In chapter 21, we read, Then came the heads of the fathers of the Levites to Eliezer the priest and unto Joshua the son of Nun. And the priests were saying, Now look, we know that we don't get any land, but we were promised cities.

And that they were to be given cities and the suburbs of those cities for their farming and all. Now, automatically, the cities of refuge were cities that belonged to the Levites. But other cities were also given to them and these cities are listed through chapter 21.

When we get into verse 43, The Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers, and they possessed it and dwelt therein. Now the Lord gave it all to them. The thing is, they didn't take it all.

The Lord has given us a lot more than we have taken. We haven't really possessed all that God has given to us. It is an interesting thing that God has given salvation to every man who will take it, but not everybody has taken it.

The gifts of God are already given by God. Now it is up to you by faith to claim it, to take it. The gift of salvation, it is there.

If you'll claim it, if you'll take it. The gift of the Holy Spirit, it is there if you'll take it and claim it. So God gave them all of the land that He promised to give to them.

Their problem was that they just didn't take it all. And the Lord gave them rest round about according to all that He swore unto their fathers. And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them, for the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

And there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel. It all came to pass. And so here is a little testimony of the faithfulness of God.

Not one good word of God failed. He kept His promises to them completely. God honors His Word.

God will honor His Word. Here, God will not fail to keep His promise. And thus, all of those good things which God had promised, He fulfilled.

Now in chapter 22, after now the land has all been given and apportioned out, Joshua called the men from Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. Now you remember, these are the people who when they were on the east bank of the Jordan River, had already established there. It was good grazing country.

They said, we're farmers. This is great territory. We'd love to just stay over here and have our inheritance right here where we are.

And so Moses said, providing you'll send your fighting forces over with us to conquer the land. When the land is all conquered, then you can come back. You can leave your wives and children, your families here.

You send your fighting men over with us to help take the land. Once the land is taken, then you may come back and you can dwell in the land here. And so they promised that they would do just that.

That they would come over and they kept their promise. Now the land has all been conquered. The tribes have all received their portion.

So Joshua called this fighting brigade to him of the tribe of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh who wanted the land on the other side of the Jordan River. And he said, you fellows have fulfilled your promise. You've fulfilled your bargain.

You've done what you said you would do and what was commanded by Moses. Now you may return back to your families. Take with you all of the spoils of war.

For in conquering this land, of course, they conquered all these cities and they actually had tremendous wealth. The spoils of war, the silver, the gold, the brass, the cattle, the sheep and all. And he says, take them back and share them within the tribes back on the other side of the Jordan.

And so you may return now. They were setting them free. They having fulfilled their portion of the deal, now they could go back and establish with their families on the other side of the Jordan River.

Now, as they were going back, when they got to the Jordan River and they crossed it, they built a huge altar that you could see for miles. And word came back to the men of Israel and they gathered the princes in Shechem. And they said they have built an altar to offer sacrifices and all.

And the whole house of Israel was ready to go over and attack them because they thought that they were already lapsing into idolatry. That they would dare to offer sacrifices to God in a place other than the tabernacle. The place that God had established.

And so the princes of Israel got together and they came over to the men of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh and they said, what are you doing? Did you forget already the problems that our fathers have had because of idolatry? What are you doing erecting this big altar to offer sacrifices? They said, wait a minute. You've got it all wrong. We had no intention of making any sacrifices on this altar at all.

We have no intention of making any burnt offerings or sin offerings or anything on this. This is just a reminder that we belong to you. Because we're afraid that in another generation or so, that your children will say to our children, hey, you guys live on the other side of the river.

You don't have any part with us. So this is a sign that's a memorial to show that we are a part of you, that we worship the true and the living God and we have no intention of offering sacrifices here. This is just so that your kids can't say to our kids, hey, because you live on the other side of the river, you don't belong to us.

And so the princes of Israel were satisfied with this. They went back and they told the people, hey, they're not committing idolatry. They're not trying to create a schism and pull away.

But actually, it's just a memorial and it's just so that they will be identified with us in the minds of the children as they grow up and all. So it pleased all of the people of Israel and they accepted then this memorial that was erected by these tribes there on the other side of the Jordan River. So that basically is the story that you get in the 22nd chapter of Joshua.

In chapter 23, it came to pass a long time after that the Lord had given rest to Israel. A long time being about 17 years. So from the time that they conquered the land, the people had gone back to the other side, Reuben, Gad, Manasseh.

About 17 years later, Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. The stricken in age is a phrase that refers to actually a feebleness because of age. Now with Moses, man, he was a healthy critter right up until the day he died.

He didn't need glasses or anything else. His strength did not wane at all, but he was still very healthy up until the day of his death. Caleb fared much better than Joshua.

Caleb remained very healthy. When he was 125 years old, he said, now Moses promised me this area down here and I want to go down, I want permission to go down and take it, you know. And he said, as strong as I was the day, I'll spite out the land and I'm ready to take a company of men and go down and wipe out those guys.

And so he got along pretty well in his older years, but Joshua was well stricken in years, which does refer to a feebleness. The well stricken in years would mean that he really had now a hard time getting around. He probably was hard of hearing and just the processes of age had set in upon him.

I make that point to make another point and that is that God, for purposes that we do not understand, allows some people to age very well and they can remain strong and healthy to the day they die, whereas other people, age really takes its toll upon them and they become very feeble and weakened with age. The question, does that mean that Joshua was less favored by God than Moses? Or was less favored by God than Caleb? Does that mean that Joshua did not have enough faith? And that because of his lack of faith he was stricken in years? I don't think so at all. I think that that's just the way it happens and that there are some people who live to a ripe old age and remain healthy all the time and there are some people who when they get old become feeble and it has nothing at all to do with their faith or their relationship to God or God's love for them.

I do not know of any man in the Old Testament who had greater faith and more miracles through his ministry than Elisha the prophet. And yet we read in the Scripture, Now Elisha fell sick of the sickness whereof he died. This mighty man of faith.

Tremendous spiritual insight. And yet he fell sick of the sickness whereof he died. Does God allow His children to get sick? You bet He does.

Does God allow His children to get old? You bet He does. And some of them when they get old, do they get stricken with years? Yes, they do. How is it that some age well and some don't age well? I don't know.

But I think that it is very wrong for us to insinuate or to declare that if a person just has enough faith, they don't need to get feeble with old age. And that if some person becomes stricken in years, that we begin to look at them as sort of spiritually second rate. I don't know the ways of God, the purposes of God, but I do know that God allows His children many times to endure suffering.

In the New Testament, we read in the book of Acts, that Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and he had James beheaded. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, this was James the brother of John, when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he put Peter in prison intending to bring him forth the next day for a trial and execution. And the church got together and prayed.

And about the midnight hour, an angel of the Lord appeared to Peter in the prison and said, put your shoes on, Peter. And Peter put his shoes on. He says, follow me.

And the gates all started opening automatically. And Peter followed the angel out. And when they got outside of the prison, the angel left him.

And all of a sudden he realized he wasn't dreaming. He thought, this is just a dream. But it's chilly tonight and I'm out here and it's not a dream.

It's real. I'm free. So he went to the house where the church was holding a prayer meeting.

And he knocked on the door. And the young girl came to the door and he said, let me in. It's Peter.

And she was so excited, she ran back to the prayer meeting where they were praying, God, help Peter. Get Peter out of there. Lord, save Peter.

And she said, Peter's at the door. And they said, oh, you're crazy. You're dreaming.

But he kept knocking. So they went to the door and sure enough, it's Peter. So you can't really say it was the faith of the church praying that sprung Peter out of prison.

Now, did the Lord love James more than He loved Peter? Herod stretched forth his hand and beheaded James. Could not God have also saved James from being beheaded? Yes, I'm sure He could. Why didn't He? I don't know.

I do not know the mind of God. But there you have a case where the Lord did rescue Peter. Why? Because the Lord wasn't through with Peter yet.

Later on, Peter was crucified upside down. Why didn't the Lord rescue him then? Did he lose faith as he grew older? No. It was just God's time for him to go.

Now one day, it's going to be God's time for us to go. And we do not know by what means God may choose to take us. But death is not defeat for the child of God.

And we look at it entirely the wrong way. God loves us. God has given to us marvelous promises.

God will sustain us. God will be with us. God will strengthen us.

God will heal us. But there comes a time for each of us when the purposes of God have been accomplished within our lives. And why should He leave us around this rotten place any longer? And He sees fit then to take us to our blessed reward with Him in Heaven.

And that isn't defeat. That's victory when the Lord chooses by whatever means to take us home. Now some people die sudden deaths.

They appear to be in top physical condition. Good health. And suddenly they are taken with a heart attack or in an accident.

We cannot understand or know why God takes some in early childhood, some in early manhood, some in late years. When my father and brother were killed in my brother's plane. Here my father was retired.

We figured that he maybe would be around for another ten years or so. He was in good health and still very active. My brother had a motorcycle shop and my dad had just taken up dirt bike riding.

And was really loving it. And he was just an active kind of a person. But we knew, getting up at that age, five, ten years and that's going to be it.

But my brother, tremendous athlete, in the prime of life at 24 years. And I could understand the Lord taking my dad. He's at that age and you're going to go before too long now.

But my brother at 24 years, why would you snuff out a life that's right here in the prime of health and as so many people said, his whole life was before him? Well, what makes you think it isn't? But we cannot understand the ways of God. God said, My ways are not your ways. My ways are beyond your finding out.

And it is only an exercise of futility to try to find the answers to the whys of God. Why did God? Why did God? And whenever a person prefaces a question to me, Why does God? I just say, I don't know. I do not know the whys of God, nor will I allow myself to fall into the trap of seeking to understand the whys of God.

Because so many people just more or less eat themselves up with the, Why does God? Why did God? And they let that just eat them up. Rather than just accepting God did and He knows best. And so I just committed to God and His wisdom.

This past week, I had two funeral services. One for a man who was 55 years old in great shape, good health. Had a massive coronary as he was coming down the ski slopes at Mama.

What a way to go. The other one was for a baby who lived for 19 hours. Why God? You don't know.

You'll never know. It's foolish to try to understand. So, Joshua, though God loved him, he was a servant of God, a faithful servant of God.

Yet, as he got older, he became feeble and he was well stricken with years. The years weren't good to Joshua. Though God loved him and he was a true and faithful servant.

So, loving God, serving God, believing in God, trusting God is no guarantee against the fact that you may be plagued with physical problems. Some of the dearest, sweetest, most faithful Christians I know have had tremendous health problems. And it doesn't mean that there's a lack of faith in their life.

It doesn't mean that there's a lack of commitment and devotion. It may even mean that they have a deeper commitment and devotion that you wouldn't be able to take that kind of stuff. And God knows that your faith is so weak, He dares not to lay anything like that on you.

You may be cursing Him, but He knows that they have the depth and the quality that they can abide these things. Don't be so foolish as to think that a person is a second-rate child of God just because they have suffered some chronic illness in their life. And if only they followed some magic formula of positive confession or anything else, that they could have been delivered from that particular ailment.

It's hogwash. Some of the dearest saints of God endured horrible persecution and tortures and suffering and hardships. God knew they had that inner strength and fortitude to take it.

I thank God that He has given me tremendous help. It's something that I thank God for all the time because I feel so good. And maybe I am one of those weak spiritual characters.

God knows that He dare not let me be sick too long. I murmur and complain and groan about it. So He keeps me in good, strong physical condition so He doesn't have to listen to my murmuring and my moaning all the time.

I don't know why God keeps me healthy. I thank Him for it. But I pray that I would have enough grace to thank Him even if I weren't so healthy.

I pray that I'd have enough spiritual grace to give thanks unto God even if I had a weak, sickly body. But you cannot equate spirituality and physical health. You say, oh, but the Scripture says, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in good health even as thy soul doth prosper.

You didn't know I knew that Scripture, did you? Yes, I did know it was there. And that is John's personal little salutation to the Excellent Lady. Just as I would write to a friend and say, I trust that you'll stay healthy and prosper even as you are prospering spiritually.

But it is not at all a declaration of God's purpose or will for a person's life. It is John's personal little greeting to the Elect Lady. You say, but then should we pray for the sick? You bet, because the Scripture said, pray for the sick.

Shall we expect them to be healed? You bet, because the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up. But yet, on the other hand, don't think that you're going to escape the aging processes. Don't think you're going to escape death unless the Lord raptures His church, which I think He is.

But I mean, it's wrong for you to think that you have some kind of a divine immunity from problems, from distresses, from physical sufferings, from accidents or anything else. God does help us. God is good to us.

And you'll never fully understand the wise of God. I've wrestled with the wise of God for years. Growing up in a home that was a home that was really spiritually tuned, extremely beautiful, godly mother, deeply committed dad, one of the greatest personal witnesses I've ever met for Jesus Christ.

Always witnessing to people. And I grew up in this neat kind of an environment of just believing and trusting in God. From my birth, I can't remember a time when I didn't believe and trust in the Lord and love the Lord.

And I can remember when I was a little guy going down the street on my bike and just worshipping the Lord. And I was just praying and I decided, well, it's always taught when you pray, you've got to close your eyes. And I just wanted to pray and worship the Lord.

And I closed my eyes and I ran into a car. And I started wrestling with the wise of God. Why, God, did You let me run into the car? After all, I was praying.

When I'm so spiritual and praying, Lord, why weren't You watching over me? Your angels were supposed to keep me from that, Lord. What's gone wrong here, you know? Well, I discovered that God also, like my little granddaughter says, God gave me a brain and He wants me to use it. So we're not to become foolish or extreme.

And we're to leave the wise with God. Joshua was old and stricken in years. And so he called them together.

The elders and the heads of the people, the judges, their officers. And he said, I am old and stricken with age. Joshua, that's a negative confession.

That's terrible. You should never say that. What a horrible confession to make.

Hey, no, it's just plain honest. Why can't I be honest? If I don't feel good, why can't I say I don't feel good? Why should I be dishonest and say, oh, I feel great if I'm feeling miserable. Oh, it doesn't hurt.

And it's paining like everything. Joshua was just plain honest. Folks, I'm old, I'm stricken with years.

Well, it was probably obvious. He's probably leaning on his cane and can probably hardly see him, you know, just straining. Just plain honesty.

And he reminds them of God's goodness. You have seen all that the Lord your God hath done to the nations because of you, for the Lord your God has fought for you. And now I've divided the land by the lot.

And the Lord your God shall expel the rest of the enemies from before you. So Joshua, the old man stricken with years, says, be courageous and keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses. Don't turn aside from it to the right or to the left.

That you might come among these nations that remain. Neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor swear by them, nor serve them, nor bow yourselves to them. But cleave unto the Lord your God as ye have done this day.

For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong. But as for you, no man has been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand for the Lord your God, He it is that fights for you as He has promised you.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves that ye love the Lord your God. Else if you do any wise and go back and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them and go unto them, and they to you know of a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of those nations from before you, but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off the good land which the Lord has given unto you." So Joshua is giving them the charge. The charge included that of separation.

To remain separate from these people. Not to get involved in inner marriages and so forth. Not that God has separated races and is opposed today to a mixture of races.

That's not at all what it is a saying or advocating. God was preserving a race in order that He might bring His Son through this particular race. But it isn't that there today should be any kind of superior or inferior races of people.

That is wrong. For in Christ He has made us all one. Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, barbarians, Scythians, bond or free, Christ is all and in all today.

New creatures in Christ Jesus. Now, he said, Behold, I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in your hearts and in your souls that not one good thing has failed of all of the things which the Lord has spoke concerning you.

They've all come to pass and not one thing has failed thereof. God has been true. God has been faithful to His promise.

Therefore, it shall come to pass that as all the good things come upon you, you can be sure that if you fail God and turn away from God, the evil things are also going to come upon you. The destruction and all that He promised. When you've transgressed from the covenant of the Lord your God which He commanded you, and you've gone and served other gods and bowed yourselves to them, then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and ye shall perish quickly from the land.

So even as God has watched over you for good, He is declaring God will watch over you for evil. So, cleave to the Lord. Love the Lord.

Serve the Lord. Chapter 24, Joshua's continuing this final charge to the children of Israel. Picture now this old man.

He was faithful to the Lord. He has done a good job, but now he is bent over with age. He has been weakened.

His voice is probably shaky and trembling. Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, right in the heart of the land, there beneath Mount Ebal and Gerizim. And he called for the elders of Israel and for the heads and the judges, the officers, and they presented themselves before God.

And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old times. Even Terah, the father of Abraham, the father of Nechar. And they served other gods.

And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood and led him throughout all the land of Canaan and multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac. And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau. I gave to Esau the area of Mount Seir to possess it.

But Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. And I sent Moses also and Aaron. And I plagued Egypt according to that which I did among them.

And afterward I brought you out and I brought your fathers out of Egypt. And you came unto the sea and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with their chariots and horsemen into the Red Sea. And when they cried unto the Lord, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians and brought the sea upon them and covered them.

And your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt and you have dwelt in the wilderness a long season. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites that dwelt here on the other side of Jordan. And I fought with you.

And they fought with you, brethren. And I gave them into your hand that ye might possess their land. And I destroyed them from before you.

Then Balak the son of Zippor, the king of Moab, arose and he warred against Israel. And he called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. But I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still, so I delivered you out of his hand." Now, you'll notice that this has gone into the first person.

And so actually, Joshua at this point is prophesying to the leaders of Israel. And God is now speaking through Joshua a word of prophecy to these people. Having gone into the first person here, as God declares, I destroyed them.

And I delivered you out of his hand. And I sent the hornet before you and drove out the Amorites. But not with your sword or with your bow.

And I have given you a land for which you did not labor. Cities which you did not build that you might dwell in them. Vineyards and oliveyards which you did not plant.

And yet you eat of them. Now therefore, fear or reverence the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth. And put away the gods that your father served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord.

Now if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your father served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." So Joshua stands before these people, declares to them the marvelous works of God. And then he challenges them to choose this day who you're going to serve.

Recognizing that God has given to man the power and capacity of choice. Each man chooses not if you will serve or not, but who you will serve. For every man is serving somebody.

Every man is governed by some passion some guiding principle some philosophy which has become his God. He reminds them that in ancient times before the flood, people were worshiping gods. The Amorites in whose land they were now dwelling had their own gods.

There are many different gods that a man can worship. Many governing principles by which his life can be directed. A man can live after his own flesh.

That can become his God. A man can live obsessed by the desire for success. And that can become his God.

A man can live obsessed with the desire of wealth. That becomes his God. But you must choose which God you are going to serve.

The true and the living God? Or the gods that the people worshipped and served who lived before the flood? Even Terah, the father of Abraham, worshipped other gods. The Amorites worshipped other gods. Choose who you will serve.

And then declaring, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Though he is old and stricken in years, still he rules his house. It's marvelous when the husband, the father, can speak for his house.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. The people responded to Joshua and they said, Oh, we also will serve the Lord. And Joshua said, You can't serve the Lord.

They said, We will. He said, You can't. For he said, God is a jealous God.

And when you start turning away from Him, turning your backs upon Him, He won't take that lightly. But He will bring His judgments among you. For if you forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, He will turn and

do you hurt and consume you.

After that He has done good. And the people said to Joshua, No! We will serve the Lord. And Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen to serve the Lord.

And they said, We are witnesses. He said, Alright then, put away the strange gods which are among you and incline your heart unto Jehovah, God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, Jehovah our God, we will serve and His voice we will obey.

And Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and set them a statute and an ordinance there in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in a book of the law of God and took a great stone and set it there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us.

For it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us, and it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart and every man went to his own inheritance. Now it came to pass at this time that Joshua died being a hundred and ten years old.

And they buried him actually there in Mount Ephraim in this city that was given to him for his inheritance. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the days of the elders that overlived Joshua which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel. Now, it is interesting how that as you go back in history that God has done marvelous works among people and those that have seen that work of God remain committed and true.

But rarely does a work continue into a second generation. We look at the church and there have been marvelous spiritual revivals in the history of the church. And usually new denominations have been born out of spiritual revivals.

But it is tragic that rarely does a work of God continue through a second generation. Those that have seen the work of God continue to relay that which God has done. But you get into a new generation and there come modifications.

There comes organization. There comes structures and the seeking to more or less codify that which God has done. And rarely does a work of God go on into another generation.

Which makes me glad that I'm living in the last generation. I don't have to worry about this thing going on. We're going up.

We're not going on. But that would be my chief concern if I didn't believe that the rapture was so close. It's beautiful what God has done for us.

I'm thrilled with what God has done for us. But my chief concern would be that after we have gone, we have been able to see this glorious work of God. That others would come in and they'd analyze it.

They'd get the thing all structured. They'd be able to tell you all of the reasons why it was such a success. And they'd get the whole thing organized and developed and the whole thing down the tube like everything else has done in the past as far as denominations and all.

Thank God that we won't have to see that day. But, it's been true through the history. Those that have been privileged to see that work of God usually remain true.

It's the next generation. Somehow, somehow, there is a failure to adequately communicate to the next generation the marvelous things of God. In trying to analyze the failure, I think that perhaps when God blesses us, the blessings are usually multifaceted.

It's a blessing in almost every area. Spiritual blessings, material blessings, spiritual blessings, physical blessings. But we went through a lot of struggles, a lot of testing of faith, a lot of deprivations, a lot of hardships.

We went without so many times. Now that we are blessed, we don't want our children to have to experience the same hardships that we experienced. We don't want them to have to live by faith as we had to live by faith.

To have to just trust in God for the next meal. And thus, we seek to keep our children from a lot of the same hardships that we endured. And I think in that, we are keeping them from learning a lot of important lessons of trust and faith and being able to see the miraculous work of God in response to that faith and believing and trusting Him.

And thus, they don't have the same privileges of knowing the miracle working power of God that we experienced because we were going through the periods of deprivation and hardship. And thus, God doesn't become as real to them as He was to us because they haven't had to trust Him for that meal. To believe Him for a set of tires.

Now, here at the end of Joshua, there's a very interesting notation. And why this would come here at the end of Joshua, I am sure I don't know. Chuck Missler could probably give you some suggestions.

And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob had bought from Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver. And it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. Now, the children of Joseph did inhabit this Ephraim, tribe of Ephraim, did inhabit this particular area of the land through Shechem and that area through there.

So, they were the sons of Joseph. But why at this point in the text it would refer to the burial of Joseph's bones, I don't know. We did read where when the children of Israel made their exodus out of Egypt that they brought the bones of Joseph with them.

But the recording of the burial of the bones is left here for the end of Joshua. And Eliezer the son of Aaron died, and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given to him also there in Mount Ephraim. So, the old guard is passing away and the new guard is coming in.

And as we move into Judges, we'll begin to see how soon they moved away from God. How soon they went into apostasy. I think that prosperity is probably one of the most difficult things to handle.

My father used to have a little motto on his desk. God, please never prosper me above my capacity to maintain my love for You. He recognized that there was a weakness in his own life.

He knew what money could do to him. He knew what it did to his family. And thus, it was his constant prayer, God, never bless me beyond my capacity to maintain my love for You.

I think that was a rather wise prayer. So many people have been blessed beyond the capacity of maintaining that deep devotion for God. And their love begins to wane as the love of the world and the things of the world begin to occupy their lives.

Next week, we'll move on in the book of Judges. Shall we stand? There is one charge that we skipped over in chapter 22 that Joshua gave to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh as they were returning back and is found in verse 5. And he said, Love the Lord your God. Walk in His ways.

Keep His commandments. Cleave unto Him and serve Him with all your heart and soul. I think that's a tremendous exhortation.

Love the Lord your God. Walk in His ways. Keep His commandments.

Stick to Him. Cleave unto Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. And thus, may you be blessed of God this week as you walk with Him, as you serve Him, as you cleave unto Him.

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