

An Old Soldier Speaks

Joshua was one of the finest warriors ever mentioned in the Old Testament. He was assigned the glorious task of leading the children of Israel in conquest of Canaan: *“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel”* (Joshua 1:1-2).

Near the end of the book of Joshua, which details this conquest, this great warrior addresses the rulers of the nation before his death. Chapter 23 records what he said before these men and we can learn some important lessons by examining the chapter.

Joshua first reminded them of past victories in v. 3. He said, *“And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you.”* It was always God who had brought them through and blessed them. They needed to be reminded of this fact because in vv. 4-5, Joshua reminds the people that their work in warfare is not done. They still must drive out some people from the land. The possession of the land was *“as the Lord your God hath promised unto you.”* The Christian is engaged in a warfare that will not end until the last breathe is drawn. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against the powerful, spiritual forces of the devil (Ephesians 6:12).

They also needed to be reminded of their current responsibilities. In v. 6, Joshua told them that they needed to be obedient. Obedience to God’s word would demand courage, for they would be very different than the nations around them. Obedience to the Law of Moses meant following it strictly, and not turning *“aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.”* The Lord furthermore demanded that they separate themselves from the other nations. The Lord knew that intermarriages would draw them away from Him. So Joshua commanded them to *“cleave unto the Lord your God.”* Strong Christians refuse the fellowship of evil (Ephesians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18) and cleave to the Lord (Acts 11:23; Romans 12:9).

Finally, Joshua reminded the leaders of God’s judgment in vv. 12-16. If they did not retain their distinctiveness because of marrying other races, the Lord would no longer continue to drive the foreign people out of the land. Those people would be to the Israelites as *“scourges in their sides”* and *“thorns in their eyes.”* The Israelites would *“perish from off the good land which God hath given them.”* The harsh sentence would impress the need to strenuously adhere to God’s laws. The Christian needs reminders occasionally of the judgment that is coming in order to help us stay on the straight and narrow way.

Nothing that God had promised had failed the Israelites. We can rest assured that not one promise to us will fail either. Let us take heed.

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