

Choosing Faithfulness

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Joshua 24

The last three chapters of Joshua (22,23,24) contain three sermons of Joshua. They are addressed to different groups of people and contain different material, but they all essentially make the same point: the people need to be faithful to and fervently obey God. The thesis of Joshua's messages is in one sentence: "*Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.* (Joshua 24:14a)

Joshua instructs Israel to "fear" God. This fear has two sides, and both are real. One is fear that results in a godly life. It is reverential and respectful of God and His laws. The second is fear and dread of punishment. Joshua moves on in the same breath, telling Israel to serve the LORD. Next, Joshua instructs Israel to serve. This service is carried out as "unto the LORD."

1. **Sincerity** – complete, unscathed, intact, blameless, without fault, free of blemish
2. **Faithfulness** – trustworthiness, constancy, duration

Now, here is the thing: you and I can't do this on our own... (Joshua 24:19, *But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God."*)

I. Why did Joshua gather the Tribes of Israel at Shechem?

- A. Joshua was preparing for his death and the next leader (Joshua 23:14).
- B. Joshua was providing Israel with a covenant reminder (Joshua 23:15-16).
- C. Joshua was encouraging faithful obedience to the Lord in a place of historical significance
 1. It is where Abraham first built an altar (Genesis 12:6-7)
 2. It is where Jacob buried foreign gods (Genesis 35:4)

II. What Did Joshua Remind Them Of (Joshua 24:2-13)

- A. God called Abraham out of idolatry (Joshua 24:2) (See: Eph 2:1-10 – God did not choose based on our worth; He chose based on His mercy.)
 1. Though we are made alive in Christ, as the generations before us, our old nature and its corruption cling to us (Rachel, third generation, still possessed idols) (Joshua commands the throwing away of gods that their fathers served! See Joshua 24:14b)
- B. God multiplied a barren line into a nation (Joshua 24:3-4)
- C. God delivered Israel from Egypt and the Red Sea by His power, not Israel's (Joshua 24:5-7)
- D. God gave the land by His strong arm, not Israel's military strength (Joshua 24:12-13)

III. Who did Joshua call to choose the Lord? (Joshua 24:14-18)

- A. God is not calling a lost world to obey Him, they can't and won't. God is calling those who believe to obey.
 1. Joshua 24:14–15, "*Now therefore* [because of the preceding 13 verses of God's mercy and grace] *fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"
 2. Israel must decide, because of their relationship with God, who they will actually live for.
- B. Obedience is not optional.

IV. What is the Sobering Reality Joshua Turns to? (Joshua 24:19-20)

- A. The Reality: You cannot serve the LORD
- B. The Reason: He is a holy and jealous God
- C. The Reconciling: Israel's vow was sincere and still insufficient — because the problem was never whether they meant it, but whether meaning it was enough to keep it. Fearing and serving the Lord isn't sustained by how much we mean our promises. It's sustained by the same grace that made the promise possible in the first place. In other words, it is grace that saves us, grace that keeps us, and grace that sustains us in our promise.
 1. Note Israel's response in 24:21, "*No, but we will serve the LORD.*" Peter said almost these same

words to Jesus — *'Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You'* And all the disciples said the same (**Matthew 26:35**) — and before the rooster crowed, he denied Him three times (**Matthew 26:69-75**). Sincere is not the same as sufficient.

V. What is Joshua Memorializing? (Joshua 24:25-27)

- A. Joshua made a covenant promise and wrote it in the Book of the Law.
- B. Joshua set up a stone to memorialize the agreement.
- C. The stone is just a silent stone, it is a “witness” to what Israel promised.

Our Prayer for this week: Father, today we stood where Israel stood. We heard the same mercy. We felt the same pull to make the same promise: we will serve the Lord.

But Joshua was right about us before we opened our mouths. We are unable to serve You in our own strength — not because we don't mean it, but because meaning it was never enough. Israel's vow was sincere, and sincere was still not sufficient. Neither is ours.

So, we don't come to You on the strength of our own promise. We come because it is grace that saved us, grace that keeps us, and grace that will sustain us in every promise we make from here forward — one grace, doing all three, because You are the God who doesn't just ask us to keep covenant. You keep it in us.

Joshua set up a stone at Shechem to witness against Israel's word. We don't need a stone. We have Christ — who did not fail where Israel failed, and who has written Your law on hearts of flesh instead of tablets of stone.

So we don't just say "we will serve the Lord" and hope we mean it enough. We say it because You have already made us able by grace to mean it. Be worshiped for that, Lord Jesus. Amen.