

An unsatisfied Faith

Joshua son of Nun = The LORD saves [son of] perpetuity

Joshua 23:9 For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day.

...never was army crowned with such a constant uninterrupted series of successes as the armies of Israel were in the wars of Canaan. They had not only conquered the Canaanites, but were put in full possession of their land

Matthew Henry

Joshua 24:1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God.

24:2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.

24:3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac.

24:4 And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

24:5 And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.

24:6 "Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.

24:7 And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time.

24:8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you.

24:9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you,

24:10 but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand.

24:11 And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand.

24:12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow.

24:13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.'

Jos 24:14 "Now therefore 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.

24:15 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."

24:16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods,

24:17 for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed.

24:18 And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

24:20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

24:21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD."

24:22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses."

24:23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel."

24:24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem.

24:26 And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

24:27 And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."

24:28 So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

24:29 After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old.

24:30 And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-erah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash.

24:31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.

Do you remember the last part of the movie "Schindler's List?"

Schindler was a German businessman during the Holocaust who spent his fortune saving Jews from concentration camps. He used to buy them and say he needed them for working in his factories, but his real motive was saving their lives. But at the end of the war he did not rejoice in his good works but rather he wept over the amount of people he could have saved.

In many ways Joshua is a bit like Schindler.

Joshua is a biblical character who exercises faith above and beyond most other biblical characters.

Most famously he commands the sun to stand still during the battle of Beth-Horon

Joshua 10:12 At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

10:13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.

10:14 There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel.

This is significant because it gave the Israelites more time to cover a huge distance in the course of the battle, but more so because the Amorites worshiped the sun and the moon. Joshua's ability to command their so called gods, proved that Israel was on the side of the true God.

This sort of faith was possible because throughout his life Joshua has learnt valuable lesson about faith. He was living obedient to the mission God has set for him.

In chapter 24 we come to the end of his life and in spite of his victories he reflects on what he has not achieved and how he can impart his faith and sense of urgency to the next generation.

In the end of the book it is shown how anxious Joshua was to advance the glory of God, And how diligently he endeavored to obviate the fickleness and treachery of the people. With this view, not only the most impressive exhortations, but protestations, were employed, and more especially the covenant was renewed in regular form with the solemnity of an oath.

Calvin's commentaries

Joshua's intent seems to have been for each generation to pass on the stories of faith to the next generation. But as we see in the book of Judges that simply did not happen. Perhaps Joshua knew this when he says: "You are not able to serve the LORD" in verse 19. Or maybe he was trying to motivate them to think about the possibility of the nation failing to live up to their high calling. Either way his insight into the human condition is worthy of note; "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" is perhaps the reminder that at the end of the day the only heart we know is our own and secondly the only other people we are sure to have an influence on are our closest friends and those we consider to be family.

Joshua learns to rely on the Faith of God not his own faith in God

Joshua was effectively Moses Apprentice [see numbers 27] Mike mentioned this in his sermon a couple of weeks ago.

And because Joshua and Caleb are the only men over 19 at the time not to be cursed by God to die in the wilderness they are older than all the others men alive.

Numbers 14:29 your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me,

14:30 not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

14:31 But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected.

14:32 But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness.

14:33 And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness.

They were the only faithful ones from the previous generation. We presume Joshua and Caleb were roughly the same age and Caleb tells us:

Joshua 14:7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart.

So it is fair to say Joshua is at least 21 years older than the next oldest person he is addressing [apart from Caleb]. He is effectively passing the baton to the next generation. He is giving a perspective from a different generation

He was an adult when he saw what happened in Egypt. He knew what it meant to be a slave, as well as a nomad and a conqueror.

But above all this life experience he had a personal knowledge that it was God's Faith that was required to secure victory. His faith in God was not enough; he had to have faith in God's faith. That is the only way to have unshakeable faith. This came by the revelation of God.

Joshua 5:13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in

his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

5:14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

5:15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

You see this encounter and in fact the entire battle for Jericho was a way of God showing the people they had to give up what they thought they could do or even give up on what they thought God would do and rely entirely on God doing something amazing. All they had to do was obey. How simple faith is and yet how impossible it seems.

Please understand I am not there yet myself and the process of trusting God to provide a house has nearly torn my faith to pieces but as I prepared this sermon I was comforted to learn that even Joshua had his bad days.

Joshua 7:5 and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads.

7:7 And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!"

7:8 O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies!

7:9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"

7:10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?"

God teaches us not to focus on the temporal [the here and now] but see things eternally [over time]. The old verse "Count your blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done" is good practice. Or perhaps you remember "I know not what tomorrow brings, but I know who brings tomorrow". If we focus on Christ and what he achieved for us then we can pick ourselves up. This point was made beautifully last week by Giles; That Christ's death is an event that compels believers to respond. The enormity of what God gave up on the cross because he loves us is a message that God wants us to share.

And so we come back to the problem Joshua has in today's sermon

He wants the community to respond to what God has done and he wants every subsequent generation to make a response, therefore he knows the story must be told and lived out in the culture and the cultures around about that seek to choke the story must be purged.

The principle here is that; the sharing of the message keeps it alive and when God's people hear it they respond. That's why preaching and testimony and the sacraments are so important.

Have you ever wondered why so many people fell away from God and attending his Church in the last 60 years? In some cases I think the church forgot to impart stories of faith.

Well we don't need a programme to organise ourselves better and we don't need to be more entertaining; we simply have to tell the stories passionately and faithfully and ask God to reveal the message to us. Why do some churches abandon the use of old Hymns, when the secular world still demands them at memorial services, funerals and football matches?

Common faith, unites the people of God against the enemies of God

When [Winston Churchill](#) and [Franklin Roosevelt](#) met in August 1941 on the battleship [HMS Prince of Wales](#) to agree the [Atlantic Charter](#), a church service was held for which Prime Minister Churchill chose the hymns. He chose "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and afterwards made a radio broadcast explaining this choice:^[7]

We sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers" indeed, and I felt that this was no vain presumption, but that we had the right to feel that we serving a cause for the sake of which a trumpet has sounded from on high. When I looked upon that densely packed congregation of fighting men of the same language, of the same faith, of the same fundamental laws, of the same ideals ... it swept across me that here was the only hope, but also the sure hope, of saving the world from measureless degradation.

— *Winston Churchill*

You know we are no longer engaged in a war against the Amorites or the Nazi's for that matter, but we are still at war. As the Bible tells us we are all under attack from spiritual enemies who seek to lead us astray and prevent us from progressing in our faith. It is still the case today that we have a Kingdom to expand and that is the Kingdom of God, and we still expand it by telling people the stories of faith contained in the Bible [the word of God] and contained within our own stories of faith. This is described as our offensive weapon [a sword of the Spirit] in Ephesians 6. The Faith of God is described as our shield. Many of us have a true knowledge of what spiritual attack is like. My shield is so dented lately that I can only just hold it, but today [as I preach] I get to swing the sword and [Christian though I am] I hope it hurts our enemies like hell.
DO YOU SWING THE SWORD?

DO YOU KNOW THE STORIES?

If you don't please read them, we cannot advance the kingdom hiding behind our shields.
THIS IS WHAT JOSHUA WAS TRYING TO WARN ISRAEL ABOUT?

Get up and fight, don't forget the faithfulness of God who fights the battle for you. All you need do is Obey the voice of the Spirit and speak the Words of Life. All of this is achievable through prayer and Bible reading. And if you find it hard to read your bible and pray it is because the mighty forces of darkness you cannot see are relentlessly working to prevent you from taking out your sword.

You know after Joshua died the Israelites did not get up and fight to take the rest of the Promised Land until the time of King David [500 years later]. It was not because they did not have men to fight; it was because there was no desire to fight in the men they had.

So I say to you today, get up, get ready and fight the good fight. Think about the fact that you are a soldier of God in an unholy land trying to advance the Kingdom of God. And START reading the whole Bible not just the bits you like or agree with. Do not be satisfied with a faith that does not advance the kingdom of God.

Parting thought from Martin Luther

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

2 Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same;
and he must win the battle.

3 And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

4 That Word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever!