

Preparing For A New Beginning

Sermon 13 - Choose You This Day. Joshua 24

Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church, July 23, 2006

I have been around long enough to have lived under several Presidents. Of them I especially appreciated Ronald Regan. As an older man, he was elected with a message which stirred the hearts of the American people. He reminded us of the values on which our nation was founded and our need to get back to them.

In Joshua 24, Joshua delivers his final recorded message to the people of Israel. Like President Regan, he was an old man but had not lost his ability to stir up the hearts of the people of Israel. In his message he challenged them to make **three changes**. I want us to see what those changes were, why they were necessary, and to consider if we need to make them as well.

Read verse 1...

Why Shechem? A place of historical significance. According to Genesis 35:4, it is where Jacob challenged his children to put away their false gods. Here Joshua is going to do the same.

Now read verse 2...

Joshua speaks in behalf of God as a prophet to the people of Israel. He did not speak for himself. It was not his opinion, emotion, or ideas that he shared but God's- *Thus saith the Lord*. He challenged them first to make a change in their perspective of the past.

I. A Change In Their Perspective Of The Past.

Notice what he says in behalf of God. Read verses 3-13...

Joshua stirred up their memory by reminding them of the past. As I mentioned last time that serves a very important purpose in the life of every believer. But notice, Joshua is doing more than just reminding them of the past, he is reminding them of where they came from. He goes all the way

back to Abraham, known as their father, the originator of their nation, to a time when He and his family worshipped other gods. That's good to remember isn't it? Ephesians 2:2 tells us that in times past we walked according to the course of this world, but God called us out of that. It is good to remember where we came from.

Notice also that their memory was being refreshed concerning their past accomplishments. Seventeen times God says, "*I gave, took, sent, did, brought, delivered, etc.*" Their past accomplishments were actually God's blessings!

Why was it necessary to remind them of these things? How could they forget? Could it be that they, like us, tended to distort the past, emphasizing their part, minimizing God's part, consequently forgetting events like the parting of the Red Sea, God speaking at Mount Sinai, or even their disobedience at Kadesh Barnea? Now, I'm sure they would have said they would never forget, but look at Judges 2:10...

It doesn't take long to slip, and before you know it, your right back where you started. Do you ever find yourself doing that very thing? Slipping back into the course of this world? Could it be that you too need a change in your perspective of the past?

When we begin to see the past as it really needs to be remembered, it also demands a change in our perspective of the present.

II. A Change In Our Perspective Of The Present.

Notice verse 14- *Now, therefore*. On the basis of what God has done in the past, here's the challenge...

When we begin to understand what all God has done this seems only reasonable doesn't it? See Romans 12:1...

But have you ever noticed that there are some people whom you simply cannot please? God has the same problem. No matter what all He has done, some still wonder what He has done for them lately. So Joshua says in verse 15...

He gives them a clear option. "*If you don't think has taken care of you then*

fine, go back, but with all that God has done, I surely can't understand such a move. But I'll tell you what, I'm not going back, I'm not going to lose my identity. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Can you make that kind of statement? Honestly. Your presence in church is no guarantee you can. After hearing Joshua's challenge notice Israel's response in verse 16...

Great, right? But apparently hasty, emotional, and shallow. Have you ever found that to be true? Your heart gets stirred, you make a decision, but never follow through with it. That kind of response isn't good enough. Look at verse 19...

Seems contradictory doesn't it? What's Joshua getting at? God isn't satisfied with words. He isn't satisfied with unfulfilled commitments. God is holy and jealous. He cannot look upon sin. Partial giving of ourselves is not enough. God demands a total giving of our lives. Some have called this *the exchanged life*. See Galatians 2:20...

I remember vividly the moment I received Christ as my Savior. I remember just as vividly the day I answered God's call in my life for full-time service. We can't make the kind of decision Joshua is calling for and expect our lives to remain the same. That doesn't mean we will be perfect. We will still fight with our shortcomings, but we will definitely move forward in our walk with the Lord.

When we make this kind of change it will also demand a change in our perspective of the future.

III. A Change In Our Perspective Of The Future.

Read verses 22-28...

An exchanged life doesn't mean irresponsibility. God is going to still hold us accountable. Clearly, that is taught in these verses with Joshua's emphasis on witnesses. He mentions three. That is important. According to Deuteronomy 19:15, a truth is established on two or three witnesses.

Seeing that the people of Israel were determined to commit themselves to the Lord (verse 21), Joshua confronts them with three witnesses:

1. Themselves. Verse 22...

2. The Word of God. Verses 25-26a...

3. He laid a stone. Verses 26b-27...

We have such a stone. See 1 Peter 2:4-10...

We sometimes act like God will never hold us accountable as His people.
No. Don't ever get that notion. God does hold us accountable!

See Hebrews 10:26-31...

What kind of changes need to take place in your life?

Past - salvation?

Present - confession?

Future - consecration?