

25 JUNE

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 24:15c

LESSON

As for me
and my house

VERSE 15c

*... but as for me and my house,
we will serve the LORD.*

Joshua is resolute and bold. Without hesitation and without waiting for the answer of the Israelites, this centenarian declares before the nation, that he and his house will serve the LORD.

He resolved in his heart and declared with his lips his decision to serve God, regardless what they had decided. Why was he so bold? Because he knew personally and intimately, the God he wanted to serve and continue in service of. He had been in obedient service and communing with God since days past as Moses' aide [Exodus 17:9-14, 33:11]. His decision was not going to be made based on what others thought / felt / decided. His assurance was in God with Whom he walked.

His leadership of the nation did not come at the expense of his spiritual leadership of the household. He declared that his house would serve God too. Covenant homes are the training ground of the next generation of faithful men and women to serve God. In Biblical training of our children in our homes, we are being faithful stewards, and in turn are being prepared for service and responsibility in God's kingdom.

This is God's divine plan. The best legacy (indeed, the only one of eternal value) to leave our children is a godly spiritual legacy – fond and deep memories of godly parents leading them in praise of their Saviour, study of God's Word, serving Him in love, joy and humility both at home and in the community of believers. How blessed!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 28
PSALM 119:73-96

THOUGHT

Public confession of God results from private heartfelt communion.

26 JUNE

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 24:16-18

LESSON

The people's
promise

VERSE 18

*And the LORD drave out
from before us all the people,
even the Amorites which dwell
in the land: therefore will we
also serve the LORD;
for He is our God.*

The Israelites made a commitment. They promised never to turn away from the LORD nor commit apostasy. This is a vow of loyalty and faithfulness. They promised to serve the LORD. This is a vow of renewed dedication and consecration.

Why did the people choose to follow and serve God when their forefathers failed at Kadesh Barnea [Numbers 14]? Here before Joshua, they chose to recall what God had done for them and let it impact their hearts. This is meditation.

Lest we be conceited, we must realise that we ourselves are frail and vulnerable to the sins of the Israelites in the wilderness. When we look to God, His character and His blessings, as revealed in His word and our lives, and OBEY IN FAITH, we will declare as Joshua and the people. We must ask God to allow His character, actions and blessings to impact our hearts and not merely regard Him as a distant, cold and impersonal God. This is truly knowing and understanding Who God is.

This is personal faith. When we choose to forsake God and look to circumstances around us, rationalise (i.e. make excuses) why we cannot obey, we end up with sin and sorrow. We must make a commitment for the LORD, to believe and follow Him, and Him only, wholeheartedly. The effect would be service with all that we have: our time, talent and treasure.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 29
PSALM 119:97-120

THOUGHT

Far better to learn from the lessons in the Bible than from personal painful mistakes.

27 JUNE

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 24:19-21

LESSON

Joshua's warning

VERSE 19

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Joshua declared that the people could not serve God because God is a holy and jealous God. Did Joshua doubt their sincerity or was he trying to discourage the people? Perhaps the experiences of the past taught him that the children of Israel would have tremendous difficulty keeping their promise to serve God.

God's holiness demands our whole-hearted devotion to Him. Being a jealous God, He cannot share our love with others. The Israelites had seen how God withdrew His blessings when they disobeyed Him and worshipped other gods. God judged and punished them severely [Exodus 32, Numbers 25]. God sent them a clear and unequivocal message that He cannot tolerate sin. Joshua's warning emphasised the gravity of being God's servant and the consequences of sin. Joshua sought to sift out the false from the true seekers by leading the people to examine themselves critically. He hoped to sharpen their resolve and provoke their zeal in serving God.

This warning is still relevant to us today. We cannot serve God in sincerity and truth if idols, physical or intangible, occupy our time and thoughts. Is there something or someone that prevents us from attending church meetings, praying to Him or reading His Word? The rich, young ruler who obeyed all the commandments from his childhood, thought his works were sufficient to win salvation. Yet his love for material possessions prevented him from being a true follower of Jesus [Luke 18:18-25]. God wants our hearts, we must surrender everything and worship God alone.

PRAYER

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid,
your heart does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest
and have peace and sweet rest,
as you yield Him your body and soul.

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 24:22-25

LESSON

Covenant ratified

VERSE 24

*And the people said unto
Joshua, The LORD our God
will we serve, and His voice
will we obey.*

God had appeared to Abraham at Shechem, promising to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan [Genesis 12:6-7]. Jacob and his household "put away the strange gods" under an oak in Shechem, purging heathen practices from his family [Genesis 35:2-4]. The children of Israel worshipped God nearby at Mt Ebal and Gerizim on first entering Canaan [Joshua 8:30-35]. They also renewed their oath to God here after the battle at Ai. Shechem was where God's people had dedicated themselves to Him in the past, so Joshua chose this venue to ratify the covenant for its spiritual significance.

This was not a new covenant to be ratified but Joshua wanted the Israelites to renew their personal commitment to obey God. Each and every individual had to renounce his old ways of sin and idolatry and enter into service of God. By yielding in submission to God, they would enjoy the blessings of being His chosen people.

Joshua bound them by a "statute and ordinance" to demonstrate the solemnity of their promise and the strength and perpetuity of their obligation. It was not a casual agreement, they were accountable to themselves and to God.

Now that God had fulfilled His covenant with Abraham, they were to offer themselves in service of Him out of gratitude and love. Similarly, God has given us His only-begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins. Through Jesus, we have eternal life in heaven, our Promised Land, so we ought to give ourselves to serve and obey God out of our love for Him.

REMINDER

Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name. – Deuteronomy 6:12-13

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 31
PSALM 119:145-176

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 24:26-27

LESSON

The stone of witness

VERSE 27

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: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 32
PSALMS 120-122

THOUGHT

Joshua wrote down the covenant to record the promises made by the Israelites to obey God. Like a written contract between two parties stating the exact terms and conditions agreed upon, it would be a permanent reminder to them and would hold them accountable for their actions. Our God is a covenant-keeping God, He never forgets. In contrast, Man always forgets and often breaks his promises.

The great stone set under an oak would be an additional memorial for the nation to remember the covenant between God and Israel. It stood as a witness of the declarations of obedience made by the children of Israel. The stone, unlike memories and verbal promises, was not easily misplaced or lost. Set in a prominent location, it was a visible sign to all the people. Unlike paper or fabric, the stone was not easily corrupted by moth or worms, or damaged by water or fire. It was a lasting witness of the covenant that would reproach them for their disobedience and carelessness in serving God. This memorial would also be a lesson to posterity that Man is prone to wander from God and is unable to remain faithful to Him.

God's Word records many instances of His chosen servants' lapses in obedience resulting in sin. God knows we are forgetful and require frequent reminders to obey Him and do His will. Thank God for sending us these reminders through the preaching of His Word, our daily Bible reading and devotions and the encouragement from God's people. May we heed these reminders sent from God and always keep close to Him.

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons. – Deuteronomy 4:9

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 24:28-33

LESSON

The death of Joshua

VERSE 29

And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

Joshua led the people after the death of Moses; he himself died at 110 years old. Always brave, unquestioning in his obedience to God and zealous for God's glory, Joshua was called "the servant of the Lord".

Joshua was a good leader and a great example to his people. He was not self-seeking and his holy influence became an abiding power to hold the elders and people steadfast in their faith. The Israelites were faithful to God through the years of Joshua's leadership and beyond his life – such was the lasting effect of his testimony.

Joshua has sometimes been described as a type of Christ. Both Joshua and Jesus were faithful and obedient to God, courageous to the end. They were mild-mannered but firm in persuading others to serve and obey God. Joshua was a warrior leader who fought and defeated Israel's enemies of flesh and blood. Jesus Christ, our King, conquered sin and Satan with His death on the cross and resurrection. Joshua led the Israelites into their inheritance in Canaan, though they had still many more enemies to overcome and expel. Through His redemptive work on the cross, Jesus leads us into "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," [1 Peter 1:4] where we have no enemies.

May Joshua's example teach us to be a godly influence on our family and those around us, encouraging them to be faithful and obedient to God. May we yield our lives to be God's instruments, ever ready to bring Him glory and honour.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 33-34
PSALMS 123-125

THOUGHT

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. – Hebrews 11:13