

Joshua: Walking by Faith, Growing in Grace

Farewell Address

Joshua 23:1-16

November 9, 2025

HDBC

The war years are over. The army has been disbanded and the soldiers sent to their homes. The Promised Land has been distributed to the various tribes. The spoils of war have been seized. The people are about to enter into a new era as a nation. A new season was about to begin. Think about the transitions they have already made over the last two generations.

Slavery to free.

Wanderers to warriors.

Now they will transition from invaders to homesteaders

How would they handle peace in their own land? What would be the rules? How would Joshua lead the people in the early days of this new normal? We can get a pretty good idea by reading the last two chapters of Joshua. They include two speeches by the aging leader.

Because of the similarity of the speeches, some argue that they are two versions of the same speech. However, there are significant differences between the two. The first appears to have been delivered primarily to the leaders. The second seems to have been offered to the entire nation. The first speech was delivered at Shiloh and the second was at Shechem.

This morning I want us to consider his farewell address in chapter 23.

These are his final instructions for how to handle the next era of their existence. He knew that just as there are dangers in the midst of war, there are also dangers in the midst of peace. There were some principles and truths that would be important to remember during the coming peace. In reality Joshua offers two general scenarios; obey the Lord and He will bless you. Disobey Him and He will judge you. Those were the two primary options. But in presenting his case, Joshua offers no less than 7 statements worth remembering. True of them and true of us. So, let's jump right in.

1. No one stays young forever. (1-2)

Simply put, Joshua reminded the people that his days were numbered. As Moses passed from this life into death and was no longer available to lead them, the same would be true of Joshua. He would not be available to lead them forever.

2. God is the source of our victories. (3, 9-10)

Joshua reminds them that in spite of all their effort, the true reality is that God has caused them to be successful. Apart from His interacting hand with them, they would not have succeeded. It is a reminder of the invisible hand of God that was working on their behalf.

From the time Israel left Egypt, the Lord had fought for His people, delivering them from one enemy after another. He drowned the Egyptian army in the sea. He defeated the Amalekites who attacked them soon after they escaped Egypt. He brought down the walls of Jericho and defeated the city of Ai. Every time His people trusted Him and followed His instructions they found success.

3. God will finish what He starts. (4-5)

Joshua would be passing off the scene. God would not. Even with the death of Joshua, as with the death of Moses, God would still be working on behalf of His people. He would finish what He started.

Joshua acknowledged that there were still enemies within the land. There were still nations who were occupying the land promised by God to give as an inheritance to Israel. The fact that they were still there did not mean they would remain. There was still work to be done. And God would complete that work.

Let me remind you that whatever God has begun in your life, He will finish. Reminded of the words of Paul in Philippians 1:6. What God has begun in you, He will complete. He will not leave the work partially done. He's a finisher! There is something sad about an unfinished work or an completed task. You don't ever have worry about God giving up.

4. Obedience protects you from sinful influences. (6-7)

After reminding them of all that God had done, Joshua points them to the future. He reminds them that their continued success was conditioned upon their faithfulness to the Word of God.

Joshua reminded them that it was imperative that they comply completely with the Word of God. Just because the danger of war was no longer present, did not mean they could refuse to cooperate fully with the word of God.

It demands no less diligence to carry out Christ's commands in the times of tranquility than it does in seasons of hostility. If anything, more so, because it is our human tendency to grow slack and careless.

In times of peace, it is important to recognize the danger of being influenced by the sinful neighbors around them. In fact Joshua points out in 12-13 that if they do become influenced by the sinful nations there, God will stop the flow of His blessings. The expansion of peace would come to a grinding halt.

They were to keep themselves uncontaminated by the nations around them. The problem of mixing with the people who remained in the land and being influenced by them was to become a major problem for Israel. In almost every era that would come, they would find themselves being drawn into sin by the pagan people around them.

Here's a principle to remember. **When clean comes in contact with dirty, dirty often wins.** When a parent sends a child out to play in the mud with clean clothes the mud does not become clean, the clothes become dirty. This does not mean we cannot have a good and positive influence on our sinful neighbors. We can and we must. But we must also be wary of the danger we face and recognize the power the sin around us to influence and lead us away from purity. That danger is very much real and we must be conscious of it.

5. Be intentional in your relationship with God. (8, 11)

Always, the individual must cling to Christ. This does not mean we might somehow lose Him or that He is trying to get away from us. In a very real and important sense it is Jesus who clings to us and holds us safely in His hands. But at the same time our desire should be to draw deeper into Him, to learn of Him, to grow in our love for Him. Our relationship with Jesus must be a priority. Our lives are not enriched by our achievements, but by our relationship with Him.

Not only were they to avoid being influenced negatively, they were to positively cultivate their relationship with God.

Cling (8) means to cling tightly to something. It speaks of **two things being joined together in such a way that they cannot be separated**. This is a great theological concept showing just how close the people were to be with God. No distance between them.

6. You cannot embrace sin and escape consequences. (12-13)

This is very similar to what we learned from verses 4-5. However there is a subtle distinction. In those verses we learn that obedience to the Word of God is what protects us from the **influence** of those around us. In these verses Joshua takes it a step further. Notice the mention of intermarrying with the pagan nations.

This implies more than influence, it implies embrace. In other words, accepting the sins of the nations & embracing them as our own.

If Israel did not heed this warning, God would stop driving the people from the land. He would withdraw his hand of blessing. Instead of being driven from the land, the people would become a snare in the side of Israel. (This prediction would come true with a vengeance during the period of the Judges. They would become a serious obstacle to the people. Rejecting God was a serious offense that would result in devastating discipline.

7. Leaders come and go, but God remains forever. (14-16)

In verse 14 Joshua indicated that he was about to die. He knew that his time was short. Literally the Hebrew indicates that he said he would die **today**. The people were about to go through another leadership transition. Joshua would no longer be there to lead them. However, God would be there, and He never changes. Note the point Joshua makes.

God has been 100% faithful. Everything He said He would do, He has done. He has blessed you when you have been obedient and faithful. He will continue to do so if you continue to be faithful.

However, if you reject His plan, His word, His will, you can be just a sure that He will bring discipline and judgment. Loosely put, Joshua is reminding the people that **God does not need them, they need God!** Do you see that in the last part of verse 15? Remember when God suggested to Moses that He might destroy the entire nation and just start over with Moses? **God does not need us. We need Him.**

The final words of this chapter (16) are pretty serious. Remember, God gave you this land and He can take it from you. And he will, if you reject His best for you. Mercy and grace do not nullify the need for obedience and faith.

These two things can be true at the same time, and they are.

God is merciful and forgives our sin.

We are expected to obey God and reject sin.