

Joshua's Testimony

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[0 : 00] Let us turn to the word of God as we have it in the book of Joshua, chapter 23, and we'll read at verse 14. These are the words of Joshua.

And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing, literally not one word, hath failed of all the good words which the Lord your God spake concerning you.

All are come to pass unto you, and not one word hath failed thereof. Now these words, as we understand from the beginning of this chapter, were words of farewell, which Joshua uttered when he knew that he had come to the end of his life.

It was Moses who was appointed of the Lord to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt to the very borders of the land which had been promised.

And again by God's appointment, Joshua was the man to succeed him. And Joshua, in two or three places before the death of Moses, Joshua is referred to as Moses' servant, or we might say, in the authorised version it's Moses' minister.

[1 : 45] It was really Moses' servant. He was a kind of assistant to Moses. And then when Moses died, then the Lord said to Joshua, you are the man, though, to take my people into the land which I have promised.

And I think we can say that in the life of Joshua, we see an illustration of practical godliness.

For here was a man who faced a very considerable task. And he fulfilled the condition which was laid down for him at the beginning.

That is, when he was commanded to take charge of the Lord's people, the responsibility that was laid upon him was also in these terms. If you will not turn to the right or to the left, if you will follow the ways of the Lord, you will have good success.

And in this chapter we had Joshua come to the end of his earthly pilgrimage, a man who had followed the Lord in all the responsibilities and the difficulties that he faced.

[3 : 06] And friends, it is surely one of the confirmations of the reality of Christianity when we can see it in various individuals that we know, as well as in those in the Scripture.

Just by the way, last Thursday I was at the funeral service in Inverness of the late John Calvin Mackay. And it was a very moving, a very uplifting service, because not only was he a man who was just 96, a most gracious man, a most lovable man.

And although, of course, the ministers who took part were very careful, not just to make it a service, a eulogy of the man, I'm sure the man himself would have hated anything like that.

But those who knew John Calvin Mackay could recognize the grace of God in that man's life. He was referred to by one of the ministers as a Christian gentleman.

And friends, when we know people like that, I'm not just saying distinguished people, but in one another in a Christian congregation, we can say, I can see a confirmation of the reality of the Christian life in this man and in this woman.

[4 : 35] Well, praise God that we can, because it is for our encouragement that we can recognize it in those that we know. Well, we can see it in Joshua.

Here was a man who followed the Lord. Now, just look at the first few words in this.

Verse 14. And behold, this day I am going in the way of all the earth. Just Joshua's saying, I am going to die.

And he knew it. The Lord must have revealed it to him. And from what is recorded here, he gave a discourse, an exhortation to the people.

He was very calm in the face of death. And surely here, we might say, is one of the essential marks of the godly man, of the godly woman, that they are not terrified in the face of death.

[5 : 48] Why was Joshua not terrified? For the very simple and yet very profound reason that he was prepared to go.

I believe it is true history what we read of Queen Elizabeth I when she was about to die. What was her cry? Oh, for a further inch of time. Because somehow she felt that there was more that she needed, more that she ought to have done.

My kingdom for an inch of time. Friends, it is not morbid for us to consider our latter end. It is highly practical.

Because as someone has said, as death leaves us, so will judgment find us. Now there are those who I would say know nothing of the scripture, who talk about some chance, as they call it, of life after death for those who have been unrepentant in this world.

[7 : 02] A complete violation of the truth of God. As we die, so shall we be for all eternity. And therefore, it is right for us to consider our latter end.

One of the most pernicious ideas that is prevalent today, and it is peddled by those who ought to know better, is that death is a natural occurrence, that it affects us all equally, and no matter whether a man is godly or ungodly, godly or outrageously ungodly, we all pass through death in the same way.

My friends, I do not know of any more flagrant violation of the word of God than not. And it's that idea, I might say, comes right out of hell.

Because any who hold that are really intent upon, or shall we say, allowing themselves to be deluded and to be lost.

The false comfort that is deadly. Death is not a natural occurrence. It is God's judgment upon sin.

[8 : 30] Remember what God said to Adam. He was told what he could do. He was told that which he must not do, take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam, in the day that you eat thereof, you will die.

When Adam took, he died spiritually. And all the sons of Adam, as we are by nature, we are subject to death, and indeed to eternal death, unless we take the escape which is in Christ Jesus.

When we are delivered from condemnation, we are delivered from spiritual death. Now, if we go back a moment to Joshua's early days, and he was fearful, as we can understand, taking on the responsibility for the people of God, and having, so to speak, lived in the shadow of a man who I suppose in spiritual stature was head and shoulders above himself, Moses.

Moses, of course, is the most important character in the Old Testament Scriptures, and Joshua was fearful in the responsibility that he was taking on. But the Lord made him a promise, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

Now friends, just think of that phrase for the moment, that promise for the moment. God can only say that to a person who has faith. God does not say, I will be with you, to a person who has no trust in himself.

[10 : 14] It was because Moses trusted the Lord that the Lord was with Moses. It was because Joshua trusted the Lord that the Lord could say, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you, Joshua.

And friends, if we are praying, if we, on occasions, that God will be with them, what we are really praying for, or what we really ought to be praying for, by using those words, is, Lord, give that person faith in myself.

Because, friends, the Lord is not with, in the fullest sense, any who do not trust him. But Joshua had this assurance that because he trusted, the Lord was with him.

The Lord had given him a commandment at the beginning of his career, that is, when he took over the leadership after Moses, this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate to do all that is written in it.

That was the command that Joshua had received. And at the end of his life, the man could have looked back for all the faults and the failings that would have been in his life, the same as in any of them.

[11 : 40] He could have looked back to the life of obedience which the Lord had enabled him to live. he had this success which the Lord promised him on the condition of his faithfulness.

And here he is about 15 years later, his career was shorter than that of Moses, just 15 years from the death of Moses to the death of Joshua himself.

And he could look and looked back on the success that the Lord had given him. he had taken the children of Israel from the borders of the promised land into the promised land and had settled the

land between the tribes.

And that was Joshua's task completed. And no doubt at this time he would have been looking back with gratitude to the Lord for all that the Lord had enabled him to do.

So here first of all is Joshua's looking back to what the Lord had enabled him to do. And looking forward, really looking forward, with confidence, calm confidence, to his departure out of the world.

[13:00] Behold this day ongoing the way of all the earth. I remember that it was Chairman Mao and General Franco who were not many months between the deaths of both of them.

And I remember reading in the papers how there was quite a number of even Western doctors in Peking attending Chairman Mao and the same with Franco.

And yet friends, the inevitable took over Chairman Mao and Franco and every other person because it is given unto men once to die.

And however much we dislike the subject, and of course death itself is a horrible subject because it is not natural, because it speaks of the judgment of God upon sin.

My friends, we cannot avoid the topic. Unless the Lord Jesus Christ come again in our lifetime, we shall all pass through death as Moses, as Joshua, and all the millions that have been before us, so it will be unto us.

[14:19] Joshua says, behold this day I'm going the way of all the earth. Secondly, we see Joshua's charge to the people.

You know in your souls, in your heart and soul, that not one word, the Hebrew is just the literal word, that not one word hath failed of all the words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All are come to pass unto you, and not one word hath failed thereof. A worthy leader, this man, who testified to the trustworthiness of the word of God.

My friends, do you not get heartily sick of hearing what the leaders of the nation are talking about? Where is their confidence? It appears to be all in themselves.

When did we last hear any of the prominent leaders of our nation encouraging our people to trust the word of God? I can't remember.

[15:34] Here was a man who was a leader of the people, and a worthy leader, an example worthy of being followed. Joshua was like David, who followed him, perhaps about 400 years later, who had proved the Lord in very different situations, many of them painful situations.

But they had proved the truthfulness, the trustworthiness of what God says. My friends, it is a terrible indictment upon our nation at the present time that men's words are believed and followed fervently by many.

And the word of God is largely unread in the homes of our nation. Are the words of men more worthy of being followed than the word of God?

Have people no confidence in this that it's the word of God? Well, some of the experiences of Joshua, we thought already in his early days when he was taking over from Moses, he could of course at that time have thought, well here is a testimony to the promise of God that he's brought this people, his own people, he's brought this people from a seemingly impossible situation in Egypt where the children of Israel were just slaves and it looked as if they would be slaves forever because Egypt was of course one of the great powers of the world.

And Joshua when he was taking over responsibility you could have thought well look this is what the Lord has done, this is his people, they're on the way, we're not far from the land which God has promised, he's brought them all this way through all their trials in the Red Sea and the Sinai Peninsula that in itself would have spoken to Joshua concerning the promise of God which was nearing fulfillment.

[17:48] When they came to the Jordan, you ever heard the priests went ahead and stood in the Jordan so that the people could pass over. And then that incident of Jericho when he was commanded to do something which could have looked utterly stupid to walk around the city once each day and then seven times on the last day and expect that they would somehow gain entrance into the city.

But Joshua obeyed what God had said. And we know that the walls fell down and Jericho was captured. Then that painful experience just after that they went up with they thought just a few men. The report that came back was oh Ai the town that's easily taken. And the children of Israel were defeated. sin. And the Lord said to Joshua there's sin in the camp.

And you remember how Achan was discovered because of what he had done and through him failure had come and poor Joshua when he was when the children of Israel came back defeated even Joshua said would to God that we had been content not to cross over Jordan.

I must say until I studied this I never realised that Joshua himself had been tried to that extent where he wished that they hadn't gone over the Jordan into Canaan.

[19 : 21] How the burden must have weighed heavily upon him. And finally in fulfilment of God's promise Joshua was able to bring the children of Israel into Canaan and apportion them their particular sections of the land so that they would occupy it.

And now here is Joshua at the end of his momentous life testifying that nothing that God had ever said to them had failed a fulfilment.

Everything he had said had come to pass. Friends it's one thing for someone to make an assertion such and such a thing is true but it's even stronger isn't it the assertion when the person speaks and says I have tried it I have proved it or perhaps dealing with a person saying I find Mr.

so and so an utterly trustworthy person. He not only is believed to me but I have proved him. and here is Joshua saying I have proved the Lord in all my life I have proved that his word is worthy of all my trust.

And now here is Joshua giving the same charge to the people that he received himself when he took over the leadership.

[21 : 01] He was charged by the Lord not to turn aside unto this thing or that thing this person or that thing but to follow the Lord. And now this is the charge that Joshua himself is giving to the people.

When he says for instance be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses that ye turn not aside therefore to the right hand or to the left.

And friends what is it that the people of this country are hearing today? You have to be a heretic and to be outrageous and sensational so many of the fundamentals of the word of God and then you get on television not interested in the outstanding preachers of the word of God that thank God we have in our nation today but if you're a sensational bishop oh then you'll be interviewed then you'll be asked for your opinion of the Bible and this and that we've had an outrageous instance of it in this past week and what that man has said comes out of hell but he was a man who was encouraging people to trust in the word of God who himself was an example of godliness so Joshua is pressing upon the people all that

God had done for them and therefore their responsibility to live unto God in obedient service my friends God's faithfulness to his word is a glorious and yet at the same time in some respects a terrible topic God is absolutely faithful to his word absolutely everything that God says he means what he says will come to pass will come to pass and cannot fail to come to pass whether it is for the justification of those who are in Christ Jesus or the damnation of the unrepentant my friends God means every word of it I think I mentioned this recently on a midweek many of you will know the song which is famous it's in some hidden books now

I know great is thy faithfulness a great topic and yet I think the end of it the chorus just collapses why because this is what it says great is thy faithfulness Lord unto me my friends God is not in the first place he's not faithful to us he's faithful to his word in the second place God is faithful unto us but in the first place not unto us but what he says God's word is faithful because he has the ability and the intention of fulfilling everything that he has declared and therefore his faithfulness in the first place is to his word and it is to his word that Joshua himself bears testimony you know here he is pressing upon the people that they might come to the same confidence that he had himself you know in your hearts and your souls that not one word has failed of all the good words which the

[24 : 59] Lord God spake concerning you all are come to pass not one word has failed thereof you see the advantage that this man had he could speak to the people in this way he could command them to follow in the ways of God he could exhort them to follow in the ways of God because he had done so himself because he had done so himself because he had proved the Lord in the heavy responsibility and all the difficulties that he had in his career and so he's seeking earnestly that the people will prove God as he had and that they would live their lives as a nation to the glory of their God now briefly what lessons can we learn from this word firstly because that

Joshua was a great man because he lived a life of faith now friends the world has its own ideas of what constitutes greatness whether it is to be celebrated in this or that or to have a great fortune or to be notorious in this direction or that my friends true greatness comes from godliness and we

would say that Joshua was a great man God made him great and perhaps he would be the very man like Moses remember Moses was the man who was notorious I mean notorious in the sense sorry that's the Elizabethan use of it well known for his meekness and yet we would say Moses because he was such a meek man he was a great man in the size of God and so was Joshua and today friends godliness is not admired by our nation is it character is not admired it's achievement in this direction and that and yet many of those who are the household names in our nation are men whose lives are not worthy of imitation since greatness is greatness in the eyes of God and by that yardstick we would say here was a man who was a great man secondly here was a man who was ready to die he was a believing man

I think it is one of the most painful experiences that I have ever had in my life I remember a middle aged woman at whose bedside I was some years ago and she was in the advanced stages of cancer and friends all she was concerned about was getting well God was not in all her thoughts my friends what a terrible situation to be in to be near death and to be unconcerned with God my friends would you be prepared to die today as you are are you ready it's easy to be deluded isn't it Satan wishes to delude us and Satan has his instruments today that are deluding millions of people to thinking all is well with them when according to the word of God it is not and surely a Christian man should be able to say yes I am ready to go because I am resting in Jesus

Christ he is my righteousness he is my savior I have nothing to fear for the judgment of God I am united to Jesus Christ and nothing shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my friends how many of you today could honestly say I'm ready to go as I am friends if you're not in Jesus Christ now you are not ready because if you die without Christ you will receive those words of banishment to which the Lord Jesus Christ himself spoke depart from me ye curse it I never knew you I am concerned about those of you who make no profession of faith in Jesus Christ if your absence of profession is because you do not believe in

Jesus Christ as your saviour then friends you are not prepared and if you were to die without a true profession in Jesus Christ you will be lost forever the wicked shall be cast into hell and friends that's not just the notoriously wicked but those who are unforgiven those who are not born again of the spirit of God those who are not resting upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ as the saviour of sinners my friends the Lord is faithful to his word what he says he will do he will do and then as we were thinking on Wednesday evening there will be the separation and separation runs through the whole of scripture between the just and the unjust that is those who are just in Christ Jesus and those that are still in the guilt of their unrepented sin the

[31 : 32] Lord is faithful thirdly and lastly here was Joshua seeking to impress upon the people how good the Lord had been to them he said you have seen all that the Lord has done for you referring back of course to the long pilgrimage journey from bondage in Egypt into Canaan itself when I suppose at times they must almost have despaired of ever reaching Canaan because of the difficulties and because of the judgments of God upon them because of their own fickleness and unfaithfulness on many occasions but here they were now in the land that God had promised them and how much an obligation they were under to serve God all their days well we can say that indeed the Lord was good to his people because he promised them this utterly of his grace not that they deserved it in fact on their pilgrimage journey of course they'd shown how utterly undeserving they were of his goodness but he was faithful he'll be out of the game he was faithful to his promise he promised them the land of their own he brought them to it and Joshua says look how good God has been to you therefore what an obligation you are under to serve him but when we think of ourselves friends what can we say has not the Lord been good unto us have we ever been homeless starving destitute refugees is there anything more that God could have done for us in physical sense not only has he provided for us abundantly in our land and friends there are hundreds of thousands of people in the world that are starving and dying in Africa

I have read that there are 5,000 children who die every day 5,000 children who die every day what an obligation we are under because of the Lord's goodness to us and not only in physical terms but God has given us the supreme blessing of giving unto us his word we might say that the giving of God's word to a people is the greatest blessing that God can give greater than merely physical well-being and therefore friends what an obligation we are under to God himself he has fed us and clothed us and sustained us he has given us his word of truth what more can we ever expect God to do for us every moment that we live friends we live on the goodness of God we live on his bounty and every moment that we live we are running further into

God's debt and debt friends that you and I can never repay now what is it the apostle Paul teaches that the goodness of God is calculated to conduct us to repentance friends are you going to live on the goodness of God and go out of this world not resting upon Jesus Christ himself of whom you can read in his word are you going to live upon God's goodness and despise the gift of his son is that how you respond to the goodness of God my friends I believe that we as a nation and those who come under the sound of the gospel in particular you are the greatest debtors to God that there are in the world and therefore if you are found in the great day to be despised of Jesus Christ you will be utterly condemned your condemnation will be worse than those that have never had the privilege of the knowledge of the word of God let me just read this verse again Joshua said behold this day I am going the way of all the earth and ye know in your souls and in your hearts that not one word hath failed of all the words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you all are come to pass unto you and not one word hath failed may the Lord bless his word to us let us pray O Lord we thank thee for those things that we read in the scriptures of men and women in past ages who have proved thee who have followed thee when bearing particular responsibilities and have faced great tasks and great difficulties we thank thee for all those whom we can see the outworking of the reality of faith in thyself we have been thinking O Lord of this man Joshua who had come to the end of his work on earth and was commonly anticipating thy taking him away O Lord we ask thee that we may be concerned about our latter end that we may not live just for the moment but knowing indeed that it is given by thyself unto man once to die and after this the judgment O Lord give us give us give us give us give us grace to consider where we are in relationship to thyself we acknowledge thy amazing goodness to us deliver us O Lord from responding to that goodness with hard unrepentant unthankful hearts rejecting the gift of grace and of life in Jesus [38 : 32] Christ thy son thou knowest the hearts of us all we ask thee O Lord for thy glory sake and for our eternal blessing to bless us each one this day and all we pray is in the Lord Jesus name and for the strengthening and extension of his kingdom in us all Amen