

Choose Who You Will Serve

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together and then open up your Bibles to Joshua chapter 24. Let's go to the Lord together in prayer. Lord Jesus, you are good. And as we come now to your throne and study at your feet, God, I pray that you would open our eyes.

God, that you would teach us through your word, convict us by your spirit, and move us closer to you. We love you, Jesus, and we praise you. It's in your name that we pray. Amen.

Amen. We're going to be in Joshua chapter 24. I want to let you know that this is the last sermon in Joshua, but next week we'll start a new series. We're going to talk about church words. You know, some of those words that sometimes I throw into sermons that I look out and I get some puzzled looks at sometimes.

You know? I want to make sure that we're on the same page. I want to make sure that we know what atonement means, what redeem and redemption, reconciliation, those types of things. I want to make sure that we're on the same page because as we go into the future as a church together, we want to share a common vernacular.

So we're going to do that next after the book of Joshua here. Today, though, we are in Joshua chapter 24, the last chapter. Again, the last chapter in the book of Joshua. And last week in Joshua chapter 23, we talked about how Joshua addressed the leaders of Israel, the leaders, the family heads, the judges, all of them at Shechem.

[1 : 20] And he directed the first part of his final words to them. And then now in Joshua chapter 24, we're looking at Joshua's final speech, his final words, the last thing that Joshua said before he would die, at least publicly said before he would die that we have recorded.

And he addresses this to all of the people, all of the people of Israel. Joshua is preparing the people for his death, for his departure.

This is something that good leaders do, good parents do. They prepare people for what happens when they are not here anymore. Audrey and I were talking this weekend.

We had our anniversary, and that was cool. Five years of marriage to her. And y'all continue to pray for patience because she's spent five years married to me. So praise the Lord for that. Pray for patience for her, I should clarify.

Anyways, we were talking about our kids. We have two kids. We have Jack, he's two and a half, and Lydia, who is half, she's seven months old. We have Jack and Lydia.

[2 : 24] And Audrey was like, if you're a mom, then you probably understand this. She was like, oh my goodness, my babies are gonna grow up and not need me. Like, kind of out of nowhere.

I was like, yeah, isn't that the point? You know, dads, am I right? Like, that's kind of the point, right? So, but we had this conversation. And the maternal desire to keep her babies, babies, is there. And I see this responsibility that we have, and she sees it too. We share this responsibility as parents to raise them anyways, right? Wanting them to stay small and sweet and where they like us.

Right now, our kids love us. That's great. That probably won't always be the case. But they'll grow up, and the goal as parents is to raise responsible young people who can handle the world by themselves so that whenever we die, hopefully we've done a good job of raising children who can contribute to society, who are faithful followers of Jesus, who love the Lord, who are responsible for themselves.

We wanna raise independent children, right? And that's the responsibility that we all have as parents, is to raise kids, to grow them up in the ways of the Lord, to teach them the things of God so that when they're old, they make responsible decisions that honor God and treat others well, right?

[3 : 45] That's kind of the whole thing of parenting. Joshua, in some ways, is like a parent to the people of Israel, to the entire nation at this point. He was the primary leader after Moses died, and he had led them into the land.

He had led them into conquest, into battle multiple times. They've taken the land. They've conquered many, many acres in the land, most of it for sure.

And now, as he's about to die, he wants to make sure that he emphasizes the right things to all of the people before he goes. Because his job, his hope, is that he's preparing them for what happens after he's gone.

And that's what we have here at the end of Joshua, is his final words, his final will almost, the final will and testament. So it says in Joshua chapter 24, verse 1, Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their officers, and they presented themselves before God.

Joshua said to the people, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says. From ancient times, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

[5 : 02] Listen, I want to pause for just a minute there after verse 2, and I want to explain what Joshua's doing. Because how Joshua goes about preparing the people for what happens after he would soon die is he reminds them of the greatness of God.

He points them back over the history of Israel to that point, a quick recap, and he explains to them that God has done amazing, great, miraculous things time and again to confirm his people as his people.

And the way that he emphasizes the greatness of our God is by pointing to the great grace of our God. The grace of God has been displayed through all humanity, but especially in the lives of Israel and in the lives of us who believe in Jesus.

And so the way that he begins this by pointing back to the grace of God is he starts with Abraham. You guys know our old friend Abraham, right? We know the song.

Father Abraham has many sons and daughters. And many sons have Father Abraham. You know what I'm talking about? You know what I'm talking about, right? Abraham. Well, Abraham, we have this tendency when we think about Abraham to think about him in this kind of spectacular, you know, way where we're like, Abraham was probably looking for God.

[6 : 26] He probably knew of the Lord and was really trying to find God. And then God called him to go and become this great nation and do all these things, right? But what we find here in Joshua is something that we have not seen in all of Scripture to this point, but it's a claim about Abraham that's a little bit surprising.

Abraham lived beyond the Euphrates River. He's from Ur of the Chaldeans. That's in Babylon, modern-day Iraq, that area. And with his father and his family, they served other gods.

Did you know that Abraham was an idolater? Did you know that? Abraham was a pagan idolater. He served false gods. But look at what happened in verse 3.

This is the great grace of God on display. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates River and led him through all the land of Canaan and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

See, God reached in to Abraham's situation. He didn't just call him. He didn't just offer to him. He didn't just ask him, hey, Abraham, would you like to become a great nation? Would you like to become, or Abram at the time, would you like to become the father of many nations?

[7 : 38] How does that sound to you? If you like that deal, then join me. God didn't do that. God took him. God intervened in Abram's life and called him and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans into the land of Canaan.

And then from there, God continued to work graciously and magnificently with Abraham's descendants. He gave him Isaac. In verse 4, to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it.

But Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst. And afterward, I brought you out. See, again, look at this.

As we read through this history, just look at all the eyes. Look at all the things that God explains that he did. Okay? He gave Jacob and Esau land. He called Moses and Aaron to go into Egypt.

And he plagued Egypt in their midst. And he brought the people out. God, in his grace, delivered his people from captivity, from bondage. So I brought you, your fathers, out of Egypt and you came to the sea.

[8 : 44] And Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. But when they cried out to the Lord, that's all caps, Lord, that's Yahweh, the divine name.

When they cried out to the Lord, I lost my place on my Bible. I'm not going to lie to y'all. I can't find it anywhere. Found it. When they cried out to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and brought the sea upon them and covered them and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt and you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan and they fought with you. But I handed them over to you and you took possession of their land when I eliminated them before you. Then Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, rose up and fought against Israel and he sent messengers and summoned Balaam, the son of Beor, to curse you.

But I was not willing to listen to Balaam so he had to bless you and I saved you from his hand. You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho and the citizens of Jericho fought against you and the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Therefore, I handed them over to you. Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from you, not by your sword or bow. And I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities which you had not built and you have lived in them.

[10 : 11] You are eating of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant. This is God's grace through the history of a nation. Grace is God's unmerited favor.

The people of Israel did nothing to deserve this kindness from God. They did nothing to deserve land and inheritance. They did nothing to deserve special protection from God. They did nothing to deserve special fighting that God fought on their behalf.

They did nothing to deserve the safety and security and blessing that God offered them, but he graciously offered it nonetheless. This is God's grace on display. Even if you go as far back as you can possibly trace the people of Israel, still they did nothing to deserve it.

Abram wasn't such a great guy that God decided to bless all of his descendants. He was a pagan. He was an idolater. He served false gods, but God called him from that.

God brought him out of that idolatry and willingly, freely, of his own good pleasure chose to bless the entire nation from that point on.

[11 : 16] This is God's grace on display. He fought for them. He wants to make that very clear. It wasn't your sword or bow that secured your freedom in the land.

It wasn't even your construction, your ability to build houses and homes. It wasn't your gardening ability to plant vineyards and olive groves. None of those things were your doing.

I gave them to you. This is what God says. This is his grace on display. I want to also real quick address something. Verse 12, it says, then I sent the hornet before you. And I don't know if you're like me, but when I read that, I was like, the hornet?

What is this? A superhero or something? It sounds like, you know, the Marvel, the Ant-Man, and the wasp, and the hornet. Okay, anyway. No, it's not that at all. What it probably means is terror, that God sent terror before the people.

He stirred up the nation so that they couldn't stand against Israel. They were freaked out. They were terrified. Or it could literally mean bugs, that God sent in bugs to clear out land.

[12 : 17] God could have done that, but most probably it means that God sent terror ahead of the people, that he stirred up the nations. The whole point here is the same, and it's that God was the one working. God was the one acting.

Throughout all of history, throughout all of the history of Israel, God was the one who did everything. And so now, Joshua, as he's nearing the end of his life, he poses a choice to the people of Israel.

And starting in verse 14, it says, now therefore, and I've said this a ton of times probably, and I'll say it a ton more, when you see the word therefore in the Bible, you have to find out what it's there for. Okay? Because that's an important word. That's an important word. It's easy to just kind of gloss past it, but really what we see, whenever we see therefore, Joshua, and every other time it's used, it's taking what has been explained prior and now applying that to the lives of the hearers.

So, in other words, in Romans, chapters 1 through 11, Paul explains the gospel of Jesus Christ in great detail. He explains the righteousness of God.

[13:25] He explains how Jesus is the new and better Adam. He explains the grace of God. He explains the freedom from the flesh that we have in Christ. He explains the work of the Holy Spirit. All of these beautiful theological truths.

And then in chapter 12, verse 1, it says, therefore, in view of the mercies of God, so all of chapters 1 through 11 of Romans, is the mercies of God.

And in view of everything that you know about God, he says, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. This is your spiritual worship. So, in light of everything we've come to know about God, we should live as living sacrifices.

That's Romans 12, 1. That's an important therefore. Joshua 24, verse 14, has an equally important therefore. Okay? And this is, for the people of Israel, this is super important.

Okay? That they recognize that God has worked. They recognize that God has done amazing things. They see the hand of the Lord throughout the nation's history.

[14:23] They know what God has done. Therefore, how do we respond? How do we respond? And remember, Joshua is offering to these people a choice. This is an invitation.

Right? We think of invitations in worship services, like in our Southern Baptist context, where like, we sing just as I am and we pray for a minute and then we move right along. Right? Joshua is giving the people, though, a big invitation, an open invitation to respond rightly to what they see and hear about the grace of God.

Okay? That's what this is. It's a huge invitation and so now he's telling the people how they are invited to respond. Therefore, verse 14, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth.

Therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth. God is a holy God.

He's a powerful God, a mighty God. We would do well to increase our healthy, reverent fear of the Lord.

[15:32] God is not the big man upstairs. He is all-powerful. Jesus says, don't fear man who can only hurt the body.

Fear God because He can crush the body and spirit. God is to be rightly feared. the fear of God should produce a response within us.

Fear the Lord. The response should be our service. So fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth. You've seen what God did.

You've seen how mighty He is. You've seen how He's blessed you in His grace, how kind He is. But you also have to take into consideration those nations who the Israelites wiped out.

God exercised divine judgment on those nations and He used the Israelites to do it. God took these families, these nations out of the equation, dispossessed them from the land.

[16:35] God dealt very strictly with these nations. And when you think about it from that perspective, you have the grace on the one hand and the severity, the wrath, the divine punishment of God on the other.

God is to be feared and He's to be served exclusively. That's the call is exclusive, sincere, worship with integrity, service with integrity. And in truth, meaning faithfully, without wavering.

That's what God called His nation to, Israel, back in Joshua chapter 24. And can I tell you a secret? He's called His people to that same thing today. To fear Him and to serve Him in sincerity and truth.

God has called you and me to that same thing today. And He says, and do away with the gods which your father served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt and serve the Lord.

Israel had this problem. Israel had this problem. If they saw an idol, they couldn't help it. They had to worship it. They had a problem.

[17:39] They couldn't give up pagan worship. Evidently, they were still worshipping some of the same false gods that Abraham and his family worshipped beyond the Euphrates River. Along the way, we'll see in verse 15 that they've probably picked up some more foreign gods in the land.

That they've wiped out the people, but they've taken some of the idols and kept them for themselves and been worshipping these false gods in the land. And so Joshua's telling them, if you fear the Lord and you serve Him only, that means serve Him exclusively.

It means get rid of the other things, the things that hold you back, the things that cause you to stumble, the things that fight for your allegiance. Get rid of those things and serve the Lord. Purge the idolatry from among you.

This is why I had, this is why I had Eric sing, Come Thou Fount. Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing. Beautiful song. But there's that verse that says, prone to wonder, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.

Like we have this human tendency, it's not just Israel, we don't call things idols anymore, but we have this human tendency to worship and give our allegiance and our attention and our affection to false gods.

[18 : 50] And here's the thing, we have to serve God exclusively. We have to get rid of the things that hold us, that we are held to, that we, without saying the word worship, we worship by giving all of our affection and attention and our love to.

The things that we spend our money on, the things that we spend our time with, the things that we spend our attention and focus on, those things that take us away from a pure love for God, we have a tendency to do the same thing that Israel did.

We just call it different stuff. Like we call it comfort, we call it entertainment, we call it security, work, you know, work can become an idol if we're not careful, financial stability can become an idol if we're not careful.

All of these things that are good things, even kids and family can become an idol if we let it, all of these things that are good things that we have this tendency to instead of worshiping the good, faithful creator God who made them and gave them to us and to celebrate Him, we end up celebrating those things and worshiping those things.

That's idolatry is worshiping and serving the created thing instead of the creator God. And we have to, we have to cut it out. We have to stop it. Verse 15, He gives the, He gives them a choice.

[20 : 01] He gives them a call. And it's one that you, you probably have this on a pillow stitched in your house or like on a picture frame on the wall. There's a really, really well-known verse.

Joshua 24, 15 says, but if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve. Whether the gods which your father served, which were beyond the Euphrates River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Joshua gave them a choice and just so you know, this is a pretty shocking choice to give to the people. He told them to choose. Who are you going to serve? And that choice stands before us today. But I want you to see that what Joshua told them before this in verses 1 through 13 make it very clear that there's no contest whatsoever.

There's no decision to make. Who are you going to serve? The pagan gods who God crushed by his might? The pagan gods who couldn't stop God from bringing about destruction and dispossessing them from the land?

The pagan gods who promised good things but left your hands empty? Or the Lord who by his grace, by his goodness only, chose you of all the people of the earth to be his own possession?

[21 : 25] He took Abram from pagan worship. He called him to exclusive service in worship. He brought the people out of Egypt.

He delivered them from Egypt through Moses and Aaron. Moses couldn't even do public speaking well. He was uncomfortable talking in front of people. God used him anyways. He led you through the wilderness even though you sinned, even though you struggled and you wandered for 40 years. By the way, the journey from where they were in Egypt to the land of Kadesh Barnea right outside of Israel was about an 11 day journey. They turned an 11 day journey into 40 years.

And even then, God protected them. God kept them. God fought for them. God sent terror before them. And then God fulfilled all of his other promises and gave them this land.

So who are you going to serve? That's what Joshua tells him. You know the grace of God. God, you know the goodness of God. So who are you going to serve? Are you going to serve him?

[22 : 30] Or ultimately, are you going to reject him and serve yourself? That's the question. Now, I've been mostly preaching to us who believe so far through this, but I want you to understand that this choice that Joshua gives, if you're in this room and you don't have a relationship with Jesus, you need to hear this.

You need to hear this choice. Because essentially, what Joshua's telling the people and what he's asking the people is, what more do you need before you'll worship God, before you'll serve him exclusively?

What else do you need to see before you submit to him? And so the question, if you don't believe in Jesus, if you haven't, if you haven't committed your life to Christ and submitted to his lordship, the question to you today from the word of God is what are you waiting for?

Years later, Elijah, the prophet, would stand up in the midst of the prophets of Baal and he would say to them and to the rest of the people of Israel, and he would say, how long are you going to waver between two decisions?

Get off the fence. If Baal is God, then serve him. If Yahweh, if the Lord is God, then serve him. And then he showed them, he demonstrated, God demonstrated through Elijah his power, he demonstrated his presence, he demonstrated that the Lord alone is God.

[23 : 57] So I don't know, I've heard people say things like I'm waiting for a sign, right? Once I get that sign, I'm going to get my life right. You know what I mean? Like I'm going to stop that, cut that out of my life and I'll be, I'll be real serious about church.

Once I get that sign, whatever it is, well listen, take this word for what it is. It is a sign from heaven, God's own word to you today where he says to you, who will you serve?

Make your choice. Make your choice. And Joshua makes it really clear who he's going to serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And guess what?

Joshua's house was better for it. If you serve the Lord faithfully, husbands, fathers, your family will be blessed for it. So who will you serve?

I love the response of the people. They answered with the right words. Verse 16, the people answered and said, far be it from us that we would abandon the Lord to serve other gods. For the Lord our God is he who brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt from the house of slaves and did these great signs in our sight and watched over us through all the way which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.

[25 : 13] The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord for he is our God. That sounds great, right?

That sounds really, that's exactly what we want to hear. So if I just said to you, hey, who are you going to serve? And your response in your heart was, I'll serve the Lord. Well, I want you to understand Joshua's response is really surprising.

Joshua's response is a little bit unorthodox. And if you want to come up and talk to me after the service, I won't respond this way, okay? Because I'll tell you now, so I don't have to then. But this is what it says.

Verse 19, Joshua said to the people, you will not be able to serve the Lord. That sounds like the right thing, right? We're going to serve the Lord.

What are you talking about, Joshua? There's choice. There's no choice in the matter. It's very clear. God is God. The Lord is God. There is no other. We'll serve the Lord. Joshua's response, you can't. You can't.

[26 : 09] Listen, in our own strength, we cannot offer to God the worship and service that he deserves. We can't.

And why? Because he is a holy God. That means he's set apart. He's holy. He's perfect. He's unique. He is himself good.

And he is a jealous God. Meaning he doesn't have, God doesn't have a split custody agreement. Okay? You don't get to worship God on Sundays and then worship yourself on Monday through Saturday.

That's not the deal that God has made. He makes it clear. He is a jealous God. He will not forgive. Your transgressions and sins. Boy, that doesn't sound like the Bible.

But keep going. Verse 20, If you abandon the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and destroy you after he has done good to you. The point here is, look, God expects, he demands, he calls you to exclusive worship.

[27 : 13] Not a divided attention. Right? He calls for your undivided, exclusive, committed service. In other words, God is not a God who offers cheap grace.

And we live in a world and in a culture where cheap grace gets passed around like it's nothing. Like, no, I know I'm saved. I know I'm a Christian.

Oh, well, why do you know you're a Christian? Well, I got baptized when I was, you know, five. I know I'm a Christian. I'm good. I don't want to talk about it. I know I'm good. Okay, have you ever lived for Jesus in your life?

Right? Have you ever shown the fruit of the Spirit? Has God ever, has God ever worked through you? Have you, do you serve in the church? Are you faithful to him? Do you read his word? Are you consumed by him?

No, no, but I was baptized when I was five, so like I'm fine, right? We offer this cheap grace and guys, that's not what God offers. God's grace demands our allegiance.

[28 : 13] God's grace demands our service. God's grace demands our commitment. You jump ahead to the second to last book in the New Testament, the book of Jude.

We don't spend too much time in Jude because it's really small, but verse four, Jude explains why he's writing this letter, this short letter. He says, for certain people have crept in to the church. He's, they've crept into the church unnoticed. Those who were long before hand marked out for this condemnation, that is, that's punishment, separation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into indecent behavior and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Cheap grace denies Jesus as Lord. Cheap grace is the belief that I can live however I want because I've punched my get out of hell free card. God is not Mr. Monopoly Man or whatever his name is.

He is a holy and just God. He doesn't just call us to pray a prayer, he calls us to live for him. He calls us to commitment.

[29 : 25] So that's what Josh was trying to make really clear to the people. And I think that if I knew that I was going to die, Audrey don't listen to this, the kind of conversation stresses her out. If I knew that I was going to die, this might be the last message that I would preach.

Because I feel so strongly the same weight of what Joshua is trying to convey to the people that God's grace is not something for us to just toss around and act as if it's nothing.

Right? God himself isn't just the cosmic genie who we get to pray to whenever we're feeling sad. God is a holy God and he demands our attention, our allegiance, our service, and our worship.

And so look, if I ask that question, who will you serve? And you said, again, to your heart, you're like, I'm going to serve the Lord. Well, so that I don't have to say verse 19 to you if you come up and talk with me, listen to this, Jesus makes it really clear, the call to discipleship is costly.

Jesus says that if you want to follow him, you have to deny yourself. You have to carry your cross daily and follow him. Cheap grace wasn't an option for the early Christians, was it?

[30 : 37] They were persecuted, killed, set on fire, fed to lions, starved, imprisoned, all of these things because of what they confessed about Jesus. And we think that's so far removed, but there is persecution happening in droves in Africa right now today.

People, Christians, are being killed, separated from their families. Children are being killed in front of their parents, all because they believed in Jesus Christ and received his grace.

How is that right? How is that fair? That's not, there's no cheap grace there. They're committed to Jesus Christ and him crucified. We would do well to have a wake-up call.

God has not called us to cheap grace. He's called us to lifelong commitment, to holiness, to a pursuit of him. Verse 21, the people said, no, but we will serve the Lord.

So Joshua said to the people, you are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord to serve him. In other words, if you don't serve the Lord, if you serve false gods, if you go off and don't commit to him, well, you condemn yourself because you've confessed that you'll serve the Lord.

[31 : 53] And they said, they agreed, we are witnesses. Verse 23, now then, do away with the foreign gods which are in your midst and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.

And the people said to Joshua, we will serve the Lord our God and obey his voice. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. 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 yoke that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Then Joshua said to all the people, behold, this stone shall be a witness against us because it has heard all the words of the Lord which he spoke to us. So it shall be a witness against you so that you do not deny your God.

Then Joshua dismissed the people each to his own inheritance. He preached the message. He gave them the invitation. They committed. They responded.

And so he did what he could do. He gave them a reminder. We do well, we remember well when we have physical reminders. Right?

[33 : 01] The people of Israel had this stone. When they saw that stone, when they went to Shechem, you know, people traveling in to worship at Shiloh at the tabernacle, they might pass through Shechem. When they see that stone, they would remember the commitment that they made to serve the Lord only.

We do well when we have physical reminders. others. And so we're going to have a time of response, an invitation today. It'll be a little bit different. The rest of Joshua, by the way, the book, it's kind of a final little recap, okay?

Joshua dies at 110 years old. They buried him in his land in Timnath-Serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim in the north of Mount Gash. And then look at verse 31. It kind of ends on this hopeful note.

Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua and had known every deed of the Lord which he had done for Israel. And then they were obedient. They buried the bones of Joseph. They brought those out of Egypt. They buried Joseph in land that Jacob had bought in Shechem. And then Eliezer, the high priest, also died. So you have this final conclusion.

[34 : 01] These leaders are dying off and then you see in Judges what happens pretty soon after. They stop following the Lord. But I want you to take a moment as we're going to have this time of response. Eric's going to play a song like we normally do or sing a song.

Miss Sandra's going to play. But here's what we're going to do today. Okay? You have a choice. We all have a choice. Are we going to serve the Lord only or are we going to serve ourselves and the Lord?

Are we going to serve this false God and the Lord? Are we going to serve the Lord exclusively or not? If you don't have a relationship with Jesus then the call for you today from God's word is to repent of your sins and to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and to live for Him but if you have a relationship with Christ, maybe through this call to commitment, through this call to faithfulness, God has convicted your heart of things that you need to get rid of.

All right? So here's what we're going to do today. It's going to be a little bit different. All right? It's going to be a little bit different. We're going to have, I'm going to have four deacons. I have four deacons who has the, we got four.

Y'all can go ahead and stand up. Okay, they are going to pass out some cards, little cards, okay? Little wallet size cards. And on these cards you have Joshua 24, 27b, the end of Joshua 24, 27.

[35 : 24] You have a place to write your name, a place to write the date, and then it says commitment. And so here's what I'm going to ask you to do. The same way that for the people of Israel it was good for them to have a physical reminder of the commitment that they made to the Lord, I want you to see that you are called to commit yourself to the Lord exclusively.

And if you feel so led to make a commitment to serve the Lord exclusively, then write on that card, I commit to serving the Lord only. Just write that down.

Very simple. This is for you, by the way. I'm not taking it up. This isn't a graded experiment. It's not a class thing. This is for you. I commit to serving the Lord only. That's all you're going to write. On the back, it may be God's convicted you of some things in your life that you need to get rid of, that you need to cut out.

Write those things on the back. And underneath them, write, I will serve them no more. Don't let anything else take the place in your life that God rightly earned by sending His Son to die on the cross for your sins.

It's very simple. You can keep this in your wallet, keep it in your purse. You can use it as a witnessing tool. Whatever it takes, whatever God calls you to do with it is up to you.

[36 : 34] But I want you to take a moment and if you feel led to make a commitment, then make that commitment today. Like I said, Eric's going to play a song. We're going to sing and I'm going to invite you to do something else.

Now this is the part where the Baptist people start shaking, okay? I'd like for you to come up and just use these stairs as if they're an altar to the Lord and pray to God and ask Him to strengthen you to live faithfully for Him, exclusively for Him.

Pray and ask God if you, maybe you need to confess your sins and believe in Jesus Christ, then come up here and pray and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior and then live for Him. Pray and ask God for the strength to obey, the strength to live for Him, the strength to make this commitment

last.

Like Joshua told the people that they can't do it on their own, but guess what? God does not leave us alone. He has filled us with His Holy Spirit. So pray and ask the Spirit of God to empower you and enable you to live this committed life to Christ as He calls you to.

I'm going to pray for us and we'll sing. Lord Jesus, You are good and kind. We love You. We praise You. Thank You for this gathering of believers. Thank You, O God, that You have called us to Yourself.

[37 : 54] Lord, I pray that You would move in this room, that You would convict us where we need to abandon false gods, where we need to commit ourselves to You.

God, help us to live for You daily. God, for those in this room who don't know You, don't know You, don't have a relationship with You, O God, I pray right now that today they would understand Your grace, Your kindness.

they would understand that You've called them to Yourself. The gospel is an open invitation, an open invitation to repent and believe.

Lord Jesus, I pray that You would move in their lives right now in this room. I pray, God, that whatever other steps it takes to commit to You, that we would be willing as a church, as a people, to obediently follow.

if it means serving more publicly, if it means serving in prayer, if it means being baptized, if it means joining the church, O God, whatever You call us to, let us be faithful and obedient.

[38 : 56] We love You and praise You, and it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.