

Joshua 23:14

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the book of Joshua, chapter we read, chapter 23, and then verse 14. Joshua 23, verse 14.

So Joshua says, And now I am going, I am about to go the way of all the earth. And you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word is failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you.

All have come to pass for you. Not one of them has failed. As we know, every journey, every experience, every circumstance in this life must one day end, whether it's good or bad.

And every life as we know it in this world must one day come to an end. And that's just the nature and the way of this world. And here we have one of the great men, this man Joshua.

And he has come to the end of his days. He recognizes his days are about over. And so he gathers Israel together. And it's a time for them to reflect.

[1 : 17] Because they've been through a lot together. You've got to remember that there were years of conflict. Joshua had journeyed. He was older. Joshua and Caleb were the two men, the two spies, remember, who were able to come into the promised land because they had been obedient and faithful to God.

So Joshua had gone through so many different experiences with the people. They had been through what we would term thick and thin together. And you know that if you go through particularly deep experiences with somebody, you forge probably a lifelong bond.

You'd find that particularly people who had been through the war, who served together. There were tremendous bonds created. I remember my father who was in the destroyers in the Atlantic convoy through the war.

And many of the men who were with them, the crew, throughout these years, right until their dying day, they used to meet together. Because years and years had passed.

The bond was so strong that they used to meet together. And that's true in many different ways of life. And that would have been so true for Joshua and these men.

[2 : 39] They had been through, and the whole of Israel had been through so many deep and powerful experiences together. But anyway, the time has come when Joshua is going to go.

And Israel is now at rest. The wars have finished. The land has been conquered. And they have received. Each one has received his and her inheritance.

And in fact, this word inheritance, between chapters 13 and 21, is used over 50 times. And of course, an inheritance, the dictionary would define an inheritance as a perpetual right to an estate. And that's what Israel were given. They were given this, this is your estate. This is yours. And it's going to be passed down through the generations.

It's yours. And God, of course, God owns the whole world. It's all his. And he tells us that. But there are special places that he has.

[3 : 43] And he's earmarked them, as it were, as his own. And there are certain people throughout the world that he has specially marked as his own. And a way back in Leviticus, the Lord said that of this land, the land of Canaan.

For this land is mine. Yes, all the lands of the world are the Lord's. He's the maker of everything. But he was saying, this land is specially mine.

Because it's on this land and in this land that I am going to set this people who he had set apart from all other people. And what we've got to remember, of course, is that it was through the, remember the promise that Abraham had?

That through you and your seed, all the nations of the world will be blessed. And, of course, that came through in Jesus.

Because Jesus, of course, from the human line, he came from the line of Abraham. And, of course, that was the ultimate fulfillment. That was what this promise meant.

[4 : 47] And so, all the while, God is preparing and he's working. Everything is being worked. Everything. Throughout all these years, slow-moving years. Throughout the generations and the centuries.

Everything is moving. To the time when Jesus comes into this world. And so, the Lord is saying, this land is mine. Now, of course, when the Israelites came to claim the inheritance, they had to fight for it.

Because the Canaanites who were there were not going to lie down and say, oh, well, you've come to take it. Yep, there's their houses. There's everything. No, they had to fight for the inheritance. But the thing was, God was going to be with them.

And he was with them. And he helped them to conquer the land. And it's the same for ourselves in the spiritual warfare that we're involved in. The Lord has said, look, I have given you an inheritance. A spiritual inheritance. That is laid up for you. That's what he tells us. An inheritance. The very word. That is undefiled.

[5 : 54] And that will never fade away. It's yours. It's reserved in heaven for you. Your place is there. It's marked for you. Your inheritance. And we enter that inheritance when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

And we begin the journey to gaining that inheritance as we journey with Christ through this world. Now, sometimes it's difficult.

And sometimes we have to fight our way against, in fact, we're always, in a sense, fighting our way. Because there are enemies. The enemies, of course, we know there are satanic powers.

The kingdom of darkness. And the kingdom of darkness wants to make our journey as difficult as possible. Because Satan does not want you to enjoy being a Christian.

He wants to take your joy away. Because when Jesus has said to us, you know, he said, I want you to experience my joy. Satan says, I'm going to try and make their lives so difficult that they won't experience Jesus' joy.

[7 : 05] And we have enemies within ourselves. Because our own heart is against God. There is within us a natural inclination against God.

Of moving away. You find that whenever man fell in the garden, he began to run away from God. And that's why so many people today say, well, God is not for me.

They do. There's many people will accept. Many people don't. But many people deep down accept there is a God. But they've pushed God away. They don't want to get to know too much about him. But the thing is, there is within us this, that we want to control our own lives. There's not one of you in here who doesn't want to be, as it were, Lord of your own life.

In charge. You want to be the one who controls and calls the shots. And that's why, in many ways, it's so difficult for us to become Christians.

[8 : 14] Because we have to submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ. We have to give up, as it were, our own will. And that is so difficult.

In fact, that is impossible. And it is only by grace. By God's grace. It is only through God working in our hearts.

Subduing us. Enabling us to give in. To hold up. It's like a surrender. You put up your hands and say, that's it. I'm surrendering.

I'm giving in. I can't. I can't do this anymore. Sometimes God will take us to that place and point. But the thing is that once we are in and we've come to that place where we surrender to the Lord, then the Lord is taking us into this inheritance.

Now, sometimes you might say to yourself, you know, the battle is too strong. I feel too weak. I feel too weak to be a Christian. I feel too weak as a Christian.

[9 : 21] I'm afraid I won't make it through. The Lord will take you through. Just as he took Israel. Because at the end of the day, remember what David said when he went out to fight Goliath. The battle is the Lord's.

And it's true of every single believer that the battle is the Lord's. Yes, we are the ones who are involved in it. But ultimately, he is the one who will help us.

As it says in Philippians, work out your own salvation. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

So God's at work enabling us to do. So that's the great thing. Anyway, Joshua has gathered Israel together and he's giving them his farewell speech.

The next chapter, we would find that there's the renewal of the covenant and so on. And Joshua is here. He's showing really a real mark, you would say, of God's people here as he prepares to die.

[10:21] What's Joshua's great concern at this moment? He's about to leave Israel. His concern is not about his death, but about the living, those he's leaving behind.

And he wants the best for them. And what is the best that he wants? He wants them to be absolutely focused, like we were saying to the young people today, focused upon the Lord.

Because Joshua here isn't talking about economic prosperity and political development and growth and that they will become the sort of a great global or a superpower.

All these things are secondary. The number one priority is nationally that they are right with God.

And Joshua knows if they're right with God, then the other things will fall into place.

Righteousness, we're told in the Bible, exalts a nation. And so Joshua was aware of this. And that's why he's at pains as he's preparing to die, that everything will go well.

[11:31] With Israel, with the people of God. And we know that there will be no lasting good if the Lord is not our number one priority. And so Joshua says, I am about to go the way of all the earth.

In other words, I'm mortal. Great and all as a soldier, faithful and mighty, the day had come to an end.

And as we know, it is from dust that we came and it is to dust that we will return. We were singing in Psalm 90 just a little ago.

And that psalm was penned by Moses. And it's one of these bold, thunderous psalms. That on the one hand, exalts the power and the sovereignty and the eternity of God over against the frailty and the brevity of our life here on earth.

That's what we find. Before the mountains were ever brought forth. Or before you had formed the earth. Even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

[12:44] That's how it begins. And you say to Israel, wow, that is some statement. And over against the eternity of God and his majesty and power, here we are.

Frail, fickle, weak when we look at it. And our lives are so short. In that psalm, it talks about our lives being like a tale that is told, just like a story.

Isn't that true? That's so often what it's like. We sit down with a story book and we read it and then it's over. We sit down and tell people the story. And that's what our lives are like.

It's a story and then it's over. And it's no wonder that Moses, writing in that psalm, he says, in light of that, let us, he said, teach us, Lord.

This was part of the prayer in the psalm. Lord, teach us to number our days and to apply our hearts to wisdom. And so we journey through life. Give us that idea that, you know, life is passing.

[13:51] But give us that wisdom. And where's that wisdom? That wisdom, of course, is found from the Lord. And so Joshua is announcing here that he is about to die.

And the one thing I think Joshua is very aware of is that while he was in service to the Lord here, service wasn't going to end. He was going into continual service.

But then Joshua, he announces, of course, that he's going the way of all the earth. But what he's highlighting to the people is God's faithfulness.

And he's saying to the people, remember God's faithfulness. You know in your heart and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you.

All have come to pass. Not one of them has failed. One of the greatest virtues in this world is faithfulness. We love people who are faithful, who are loyal, who are dependable, who you can trust.

[15:01] It's one of the great qualities. And you say to your shepherd, it's wonderful having this person and that person. And I know that they're faithful. There's something wonderful in it.

Well, the Lord is absolutely and utterly faithful. He's faithful to every word that he gives. Now, you and I aren't. And we may promise this and that.

And we might have every intention of fulfilling that promise. But things can come in the way. And sometimes our memories are bad. And we forget. And afterwards, we say, oh, I can't believe.

I forgot. I was supposed to go here. I was supposed to go there. I said to this person I was going to do this and I was going to do that. And I forgot. Or circumstances change and you can't do it.

It's never the case with God. He knows the end from the beginning. And he has never promised anything that he won't or that he can't fulfill.

[16:00] And so Joshua is reflecting on this. And Joshua is looking back over all these years and he says, you know, God has fulfilled every single promise.

And, you know, as we look back over our lives, that is true as well for us. For instance, God promised to guide Israel.

But he has also promised to guide us as well. And, you know, when you look over your life and I look over my life, we see the hand of God guiding. Now, God will often take you along a different path to the path you expected.

Because, you know, we make out our plans for our life and we say, well, this is what I'm going to do and this is what I plan to do. And sometimes, sometimes our plans come to fruition, but sometimes they don't.

And I'm sure all of us, doesn't matter what age you're at today, you're looking back over life. And a lot of your plans are in tatters.

[17:07] It didn't work out the way you thought or you expected. And yet, over and above all that, you look back and, yes, there might be things that have hurt and confused.

And yet, God is still at work because, you know, the thing we've got to remember is this. What is God's ultimate plan for you?

Well, you know, if you're trusting the Lord today, do you know his ultimate plan is this? It's to take you home to glory. And that is his number one priority.

Now, the journey that he has for you might be quite different to the journey that you have planned for yourself. Because you're just planning, as it were, about this world and about how we're going to live in this world and fit everything in.

But the Lord says, I've got a far, far bigger plan. A far bigger purpose. And you can't see it. But I know what it is. I know the end is in view.

[18:20] And that is why our plans and God's plans sometimes come into collision. And we don't understand what exactly is happening.

God has not only promised to guide Israel. He promised to sustain them all the way along. And that's exactly what he did. He fed them with bread from heaven, literally, for nearly 40 years. He provided for them at every turn. And he's done the same thing for us as well. Because we are here where we are.

And the Lord has sustained us in different ways. He sustained us by sermons. He sustained us by his word.

He sustained us by giving us people along the way. We can never underestimate the good that some people have brought into our lives.

[19:22] You look back over your life. And there have been certain people who have helped you and have done things for you that maybe to a certain extent have shaped your life.

And you look back and you say, I'm so thankful that I met that person. And life is full of these meetings. And you look back and this is all part of God's work and God's plan and God's sustaining. And God, who has made us for himself, wants us to be praying to him. Now, I believe that every person in here today prays to God.

But as we know, prayer is not just a kind of a shopping list. And we go to the Lord and say, well, Lord, will you do this for me and will you do that for me? Ultimately, prayer is about fellowship with the Lord.

The Lord wants us to be with him. And to talk with him. And to enjoy him. Not just that we will come now and again. And if we're only coming now and again, you know the Lord's going to maybe bring things, allow things, in order for us to talk to him.

[20:33] You'll find at the very beginning in Genesis, there's that lovely expression of God walking in the cool of the day in the garden. And what a beautiful picture that is of coming into fellowship.

God enjoys it. And there's no question but Adam and Eve enjoyed it. And that's what God has made us for himself.

He wants us to enjoy him because he enjoys us. And he enjoys us more and more the more we spend time with him.

We sometimes forget all that. And we sometimes lose sight of God's enjoyment of his people. Because he's made us for himself.

He says, my people are my portion in this world. Have you thought about that? So we've got to reflect upon that. And so God is sustaining us along the way.

[21 : 38] He's also promising to keep us and protect us. And by that, ultimately, again, it's the end he has in view. Our souls.

Because our bodies are only, we've only got them in this world. We're going to have them forever. But in this world, we only have them for a few years.

Our soul moves on. And it's ultimately the protection of the soul that the Lord is promising. Because we cannot protect that of shells. And he's put a guard around it.

So that despite all the enemies and all the attacks, he will keep us. And he promises us grace in time of need. And my dear friends, that is so true.

Grace in time of need. And you know, when you read that at the very beginning, maybe, of your journey, where he says, my grace is sufficient for you. And you say to yourself, oh, well, that's good.

[22 : 42] But you know, along the way, you come to discover just how true that is. As Spurgeon used to say, there's even grace in the grammar. My grace is sufficient for you.

And it's when you go through the heartaches. And when you go through things that tear and rip you to shreds. Things that rip your heart out. And yet, you find you are here today.

You know, there are people here today who never thought they would reach this particular point in their life. Because their world's collapsed. Their whole world, as they knew, had collapsed.

And how are you here today? You know, you're here because of God's grace. A grace and a strength that is beyond yourself. And so he has promised us.

But what we've got to see here is, and this is what Joshua is saying. He's saying to them, as God has been for you in the past, so he will be for you in the present.

[23 : 48] Because you have not yet arrived home. It's not over. Joshua is saying that, yes, you've got your inheritance. You've settled down in the land. But don't think for one moment that's it.

You cannot rest back on your laurels. You still have to be, you've still got to be focused. You've still got to be in guard. But you will come to that full rest.

And that's what the Lord is doing. Because there's still work to be done. We're to be sanctified. You and I are being sanctified all the time. The Lord's at work. And it's a slow process.

And it's a painful process. Now, the Lord, you know, the Lord can sanctify a person in a moment. Usually the work of sanctification takes years and years and years.

Because we live for years and years and years. But sometimes we don't. And sometimes the work of sanctification is not years.

[24 : 46] And not even months. And not even days. And sometimes not even hours. But minutes. The thief on the cross. It was in his dying moments.

That he called out to the Lord. And the Lord said to him today. You will be with me in paradise. And the Lord is able. And he does that. He can change. And he can sanctify.

The work of sanctification is taking place powerfully. But we know that, of course, at death. The souls of believers are made perfect in holiness. And do immediately pass into glory. It only takes a moment.

A second. Remember the person who was on the horse. And fell off the horse. And he was galloping along on the horse.

As an unbeliever. He was thrown off the horse. And he landed on the ground. A believer. He said, from the stirrup to the ground. Mercy sought. Mercy found. As he was flying through the air.

[25 : 46] Just cried out to the Lord. And it was so quick. Just like that. So the Lord is able to do that. But in the main.

It is, as it were. A slower process. And sometimes we feel it's not happening at all. Maybe some of you are here today. And you say, you know this. I hear about this work of sanctification. And sanctification is where the Lord is changing me.

More and more into the image of Christ. I cannot feel that happening to me. In fact. As I look at myself. I think I'm getting less and less like Jesus.

You look back over your Christian life. And you say. You know, years ago. I think I was a far better Christian than I am today. Ah, but there's a maturity about you today.

That wasn't then. You're seeing things differently. And whether you see it or not. The Lord is at work. And God is also working all things together for good.

[26 : 48] And you say to yourself. I don't see that. But the Lord hasn't promised. That you will see all things working together for good. He has promised.

He will work all things together for good. And so we've got to notice that. He hasn't promised. You will see all things working together for good.

Whether I believe we will. In glory. We will see. How everything did work for good. In this world we won't.

I don't believe. That we will see. That everything. Has worked together for good. Remember Jacob. Jacob near the end of his life.

He was saying. All these things are against me. Where he had experienced so many difficulties. And pains and hardships. But they weren't against him. And before he died.

[27 : 44] He saw that some of these things were actually. They were actually working. For him. But he didn't see that everything was working. For him. And that's sometimes the way it is. As well.

But we. This is where faith comes in. And say well. Even though I cannot see it. This is what the Lord is actually saying. And he promises then. To bring you home.

The God who cannot lie. He has promised. To bring you home. And we all like to get home. There's no place like home. And spiritually.

There is no place like home. I hope all of you today. That that's where you're journeying. You're journeying home. To be with the Lord. I believe it's a desire.

I don't think there's anybody in here today. Who says you know. I wouldn't like to go to heaven. To be with the Lord. I don't think anybody in here today. Would be saying that.

[28 : 39] Because. It would be very strange. To be saying that. And to be here. But you make sure that. If this is what you want. That you are in Jesus today.

That you're safe in him. That you have that. That you have that security. By resting. Your soul. In him. And that's the word resting.

Beautiful word. Where all the. The turmoil. And the uncertainty. And the lack of peace. All these things. It can all be brought together.

It's like this healing. In Jesus. May we know that. May we know then. The fulfillment. Of all his promises. As we will commit our life.

To him. Let us pray. Oh Lord. We give thanks for. All the promises of Jesus. These promises. Which are true.

[29 : 35] Faithful and true. And we pray Lord. To help us. And to bless us. To encourage us. As we go on in the way. Oh Lord. Deliver us from.

All the. The troubles. And difficulties. That so often. Confront us in life. Grant us courage. Grant us grace. And grant us. Your blessing.

In everything. Be with us now. And take. Take away our sin. And take us home safely. In Jesus name we ask all. Amen. Amen. Our final.