

Sunday AM

Service ~ June 18, 2023

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” ⁴ These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.” (Psalm 42:1-5, NIV)

Let us pray.... Dear Lord, our soul pants for you this morning. We long to be in your presence. We long to worship you with others in person but today we can't, despite all our good intentions and so we come to you by ourselves this morning or with our family around us. We need you. We need you like we need our food and drink. We need your presence, your forgiveness, your love, your grace, your help and power. So give us more of you today. Let us see more of your glory as we sing our songs. Let us hear more your character as we listen to your word. Let us experience more of your goodness as we pray. And draw us closer to your people as we sing the same song, pray the same prayers, listen to the same sermon, even if we are in different locations today. Help us this day to truly worship you in spirit and in truth. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song – Praise 96 [Psalm 96 Praise - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sing unto the Lord a new song
Sing unto the Lord all the earth
Sing to the Lord, bless his name
Tell of his salvation day by day.
 2. Majesty and honour are his
Strength and beauty, glory and righteousness
Great is the Lord, and deserving of praise
He is to be feared above all gods. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Let all the creation be glad
The earth and the sea sing for joy
Before the Lord, the judge of the earth
Who judges us in righteousness and truth. |
|--|--|

Chorus Worship the Lord in holy array
Tremble before him all the earth
Our God reigns.

Bible Reading – Joshua 22:1-27 (NIV)

Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh ² and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. ³ For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the LORD your God gave you. ⁴ Now that the LORD your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. ⁵ But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” ⁶ Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes. ⁷ (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan along with their fellow Israelites.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them, ⁸ saying, “Return to your

homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing—and divide the plunder from your enemies with your fellow Israelites.”⁹ So the Reubenites, the Gadites & the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the LORD through Moses.¹⁰ When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.¹¹ And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side,¹² the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.¹³ So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad & the half-tribe of Manasseh.¹⁴ With him they sent ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.¹⁵ When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them:¹⁶ “The whole assembly of the Lord says: ‘How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the LORD and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?’¹⁷ Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the LORD!¹⁸ And are you now turning away from the LORD? “‘If you rebel against the LORD today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.¹⁹ If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the LORD’s land, where the LORD’s tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the LORD our God.²⁰ When Achan son of Zerah was unfaithful in regard to the devoted things, did not wrath come on the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.’”²¹ Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel:²² “The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the LORD, do not spare us this day.²³ If we have built our own altar to turn away from the LORD and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the LORD himself call us to account.²⁴ “No! We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?’²⁵ The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the LORD.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the LORD.²⁶ “That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’²⁷ On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices & fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the LORD.’

Announcements 18/6/23

Focus for the month – Mission. Our Church sees the value of partnering with a number of Christian mission agencies which together help us provide a wholistic response to the world wide needs of the gospel. To this end we like to pray for and support Compassion (Child Sponsorship), Samaritans Purse (Christmas Box), TEAR, Open Doors (Persecuted Church) and A Roche (Creation Care and Christian conservation). It would be great if you were able to take a personal interest in at least one of these great Christian organisations.

Prayer meetings. With so many important things happening in our church we feel it is necessary to have two Church wide prayer meetings to gather everyone together to pray. They will be held at Charlestown Church on Tuesday 27th June (6:45pm BYO dinner, 7:30pm prayer time) and Wednesday (12:30pm BYO lunch, 1:15pm prayer). Please try and find a way to come if you possibly can.

100th Anniversary. Any interested regulars are invited to a meeting TODAY from 11:30am in the Church where we will start making some plans for how we will celebrate this significant milestone. All welcome.

Compassion Sunday. Today we have invited Simeon Davidson from Compassion to talk to all three services about child Sponsorship NEXT Sunday 18th June. There will also be an opportunity to sponsor a child if the Lord lays that on your heart.

QUIZ BLITZ. Trivia ... But not as you know it. Saturday 24th June from 7:30pm. More details see our Facebook page.

Family Fellowship. Next family fellowship is scheduled for Sunday 25th June from 2-4pm. Meet at Green Point Car Park then a walk/scooter for 45 minutes, have an afternoon tea (each bring a plate) and then a walk back home. All families with kids in the Year 3-9 age are invited.

Missionary Night. Please put Sunday @ 6 on 2nd July in your diary/phones as we will be holding a missionary night and dinner. If you are able to make a soup for that night, could you please see Margaret Wright or Karen Logan.

Funeral Service for Ted Devereux. All those who knew Ted are invited to his funeral service on Monday 19th June from 12:30pm at Pettigrew's Chapel, Belmont. Please pray for Jeff, Carolyn and Cathryn and their families in their loss.

Morning Tea Routine. Each Sunday morning tea is provided for the adults and kids of our Church. We ask that parents help us to ensure that their kids do not eat from the adults table until all the adults have come out of Church and have been served. Hot drinks are not to be served to the kids as we care for our smaller ones moving around at morning tea.

Church membership. Are you interested in becoming a member of our Church. If so, please see Stephen, Jon or one of the elders and we will talk you through what the process looks like.

Help Needed for Mission Soup night. On Sunday 2nd July, the Sunday@6 service is a mission night and will be followed by a dinner of soup and rolls. If you are able to contribute to the night by providing a pot of soup, please advise Margaret Wright. Please include the type of soup you will bring in any messages.

Ladies Walking Group. We are commencing a ladies walking group which will run on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Meet at 9.45am for a 10 am start. We will walk for an hour ending near a coffee shop. BYO morning tea and/or buy a coffee after walking. Group is open to church ladies and friends of all ages. First outing will be on Tuesday 20th June and the second outing on Tuesday 4th July. For both days, meet at Warners Bay Esplanade near the Table Tennis table. Contact Margaret Wright for further details.

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Sudan: Pray for God to raise up leaders with integrity, wisdom and compassion. Pray for the Prince of Peace to extinguish long standing division, hatred and violence. Pray for the government's recent favour towards the church to continue to increase.

Pray for kingdom growth: Pray that the message of reconciliation would continue to go out in our churches, in our homes and in our communities.

Pray for victims of the Hunter Valley bush crash: Pray for God to comfort those who are grieving over the death of loved ones. Pray for healing for those victims still in hospital.

Pray for Colin Wright and his family after the passing of Colin's wife on Wednesday morning.

Pray for Bronwyn Pope and her family after the passing of Bronwyn's husband Bill on Wednesday night.

Pray for Compassion Australia: Please pray for children and their families that they may have hope, dignity and restoration. Pray that they may know they are loved, fearfully and wonderfully made, and that they matter. Pray for justice for the world's most vulnerable.

Song – Jesus loves the little children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfQN8AfUQBA>

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Jesus loves the little children
All the children of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in his sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world</p> | <p>3. Jesus loves all the mummies
All the mummies of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in his sight
Jesus loves all the mummies of the world</p> |
| <p>2. Jesus loves the little babies
All the babies of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in his sight
Jesus loves the little babies of the world</p> | <p>4. Jesus loves all the daddies
All the daddies of the world
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in his sight
Jesus loves all the daddies of the world</p> |

Bible Reading – Joshua 23:1-16

23 After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, ² summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am very old. ³ You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you. ⁴ Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵ The LORD your God himself will push them out for your sake. He will drive them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the LORD your God promised you. ⁶ “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷ Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸ But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now. ⁹ “The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. ¹⁰ One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹ So be very careful to love the LORD your God. ¹² “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, ¹³ then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you. ¹⁴ “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. ¹⁵ But just as all the good things the Lord your God has promised you have come to you, so he will bring on you all the evil things he has threatened, until the LORD your God has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. ¹⁶ If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD’s anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.”

Sermon – Let’s not win the battle and lose the war (Stephen)

The war in Ukraine continues to rage on. Russia sending long range missiles onto Kiev and Ukraine seeking more and more help from their allies in the west. But on the ground the battle is fierce and each side is quick to claim victory as one town or another (or what is left of that town) is taken by one side only to face a counter offensive by the other side. You see you can win the battle and still lose the war. You can take some ground of the other side but it is still so easy to lose it soon after.

Now in the book of Joshua, we have seen Israel up against the Canaanites and by the time we get to Joshua 22-23, the battles have been raging for about 7 years. And a lot of ground has been taken by the people of

God. A lot but not all. And we sense there is an uneasy peace happening. The Israelites are sick of fighting, they want to settle down and so the land has been allocated among the tribes, but the end goal is not the land, it is obtaining God's rest. It is about being God's people in God's place under God's rule.

Slide 2

So how does Israel ensure it doesn't win the battle and lose the war? What issues will they now face in peacetime that determine whether they do or do not lose the ground that they have gained under the leadership of Joshua? Well as we come to the end of the book of Joshua, we have seen the people of God enter the land in chapters 1-4, take the land in chapters 5-12, divide the land in chapters 12-21 and as the book ends, we will look at what they need to do to retain the land in chapters 22-24.

And this is important to us because the goal of Christian life is not just to have a life of peace but to enjoy the peace with God that Jesus wins us. You see God doesn't just convert us & then send us off to heaven, he wants us to live in this world as we await the full consummation of what it means to be a follower of God to come our way. Ground has been won not by us but by Jesus. He won the victory on the cross and draws his people to Himself but Satan wants to take back some of his lost ground. Which means he wants to rob us of our joy in Christ. So, if we can learn the lessons of Joshua 22 & 23 it will help us understand how not win the battle and lose the war.

So, we begin with Joshua tying up some of the loose ends and the first loose end is that he can now send the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh back home. You might remember at the very start of the book they had agreed to leave the lands that had been secured for their families on the east of the Jordan and join their brothers in order to take the land on the west of the Jordan, God's promised land. And they have done this for 7 long years but now it was time to go home with a word of commendation from Joshua.

Slide 3

"Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites & the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them, "You have done all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded. For a long time now, to this very day, you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the LORD your God gave you."

Joshua gives credit where credit is due. It would have been extremely tough to leave your homes and wives and families for seven years and put yourself in constant danger. But at least they now go home with Joshua's blessing and with large herds of livestock, silver, gold, bronze, iron, clothing that was their share of the plunder.

Slide 4

Just before we move on isn't that something we should do a bit more of? Giving credit where credit is due? Showing gratitude for the hard work people are doing around us? It is so much easier for us to find fault in others than to give them the praise that will encourage them to keep on serving God. Joshua here reminds us that we must work to find ways to celebrate faithfulness, and that is what he does to these two-and-a-half tribes.

Slide 5

He encourages them and then he exhorts them. Make sure you don't win the battle and lose the war. For the aim in all these things is to live in God's presence as God's people. And how do they do that? ⁵*"But be very careful to keep the commandment & the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: **to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him & to serve him with all your heart & all your soul.**"*

What does keeping God's commandments look like? What does obedience to our God look like? What does gratitude to God for winning the battles on our behalf look like? We are to love, to walk, to keep, to hold fast and to serve. That's how the promised land is secured. That is how the war is won & that is what

godliness looks like. And it seems to me that the rest of Joshua 22 & 23 fleshes these ideas out with real life concrete examples. Starting with

Slide 6

1. To love the Lord your God. (Joshua 22:9-20)

Because one of the ways we love the Lord is that we put the worship of the Lord at the very top of our priorities. And we have a zeal for Him that means that we want to root out any hint of false worship that we see in ourselves or in those around us. And that is what happens almost immediately as the two and half tribes make their way home from Shiloh.

*¹⁰“When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side, the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to **go to war against them.**”*

Slide 7

Building an altar, another altar to God, there are warning lights flashing already. God had said there is only one place where you can offer sacrifices to me and that is where I tell my people to worship me. Currently it is at the tent of meeting at Shiloh, in the future it will be at the temple in Jerusalem but now these two and a half tribes have built a second altar. A copycat altar. And it is imposing. Like today we have the big banana they had the big altar.

Now what do the rest of the Israelites do? Just let it slide? Do they say it doesn't matter how they worship God as long as they do their very best to try and worship God? No this is so serious that they prepare to go to war. This faithlessness must stop, NOW! After all that God has done for us, we don't want to win the battle and lose the war.

Slide 8

Because Israel has been down this road at least twice before and the destination they found themselves at was an ugly one. So, they say to their brothers ¹⁷*“Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the LORD! And are you now turning away from the Lord? “If you rebel against the Lord today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.”*

While they were in the desert, and we can find the reference in our Bibles at Numbers 25, the Israelites committed idolatry with the Moabites and they worshipped the pagan god Baal and God was very, very angry with them. “Guys now that we are living in the land of the promise, we don't want to provoke God's anger again, do we?”

Slide 9

And then back in Joshua 7, *“When Achan son of Zerah was unfaithful in regard to the devoted things, did not wrath come on the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.”* Brothers we can't afford to be unfaithful, we can't afford to worship false gods, we must love the Lord more than anything else. We must worship Him and Him alone. And the 9 tribes are showing that they are even willing to go to war against their brothers, mate against mate, state against state, in order to ensure that God is first.

Slide 10

It was Matthew Henry who wisely said *“Peace is a precious jewel that I would give anything for, **except truth.**”* It is a godly thing to want to protect the truth of God's word. It is the right thing to have a zeal for the worship of God. We are called to love the Lord with all that we have. But we are called not just to love the Lord but to walk in obedience to him.

Slide 11

2. To love and to walk. (Joshua 22:21-34)

And this is where some wise heads prevailed. Yes, you can be gung-ho with the truth but let's make sure we get all the facts right first. Which is why Joshua didn't send out the army, not first of all but a delegation that comprised Phineas the high priest's son and heir and one leader from each of the 9 tribes. And they decide it's not the best way, to shoot first and ask questions later, but instead jaw-jaw, is better than war-war.

And when they listen to the other side of the story, a very different picture emerges.²² *"The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the LORD, do not spare us this day. If we have built our own altar to turn away from the LORD and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the LORD himself call us to account. "*

You see this was not an attempt at finding a more convenient place to worship than Shiloh but it was set up as a witness to the unity of the people of God. The unity that the other 9 tribes had almost completely wiped out. You see the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh were living on the one side of the river and the others tribes were on the other. And there was a fear that in the future the river would divide the people and split them right down the middle. That the people on the other side of the river would look down at the two and half tribes and seek to split the people of God.

Slide 12

My first parish was at Tweed Heads and that was where the main centre was but there was a small branch Church just 15 minutes down the road and over the Tweed river at Kingscliff. Now these two congregations had been in the one church for decades and one of the things I did when I first arrived was to call a combined kids club meeting. Because we had two kid's clubs one at Tweed and the other at Kingscliff and they each operated on alternate Friday afternoons. And we ran the same programme, so what better way than to get the two teams of volunteers together to plan what we were going to do.

I still remember, one group sat on one side of the room & the other on the other side & the two did not would mix. They were both groups of Christians, both wanting to serve the Lord, both Presbyterians but there was a river between them. There was a rivalry between them, they both looked at each other suspiciously. And the two & a half tribes didn't want that to happen into the future. So, they built an altar as a witness to their unity under the Lord.

Slide 13

As one person has said unity cannot exist with apostasy, but faithfulness cannot exist without unity. There is no use winning the battle and gaining the land and then fighting against your fellow soldiers, that is a sure-fire way of losing the war. And so yes there needs to be a love for the Lord but we also need **to walk in obedience together**. We need to be unified. God's people need to be one. Jesus prayed just before his death, Lord, make them one, so that the world might know that we are one. How we walk here on earth should reflect how God does things here on earth. And unity is important, very important to the Lord.

But what is the basis of this sort of unity? Well, it is not being part of the one nation, or even being brothers and sisters in the one family. The two and half tribes saw that the basis of any unity must be in worship. So, they choose to build an altar, a place where there would be a sacrifice for their sins. A place where forgiveness is obtained and worship is expressed.

An altar would be a witness of what God has done for his people reminding all that he alone is worthy of our worship. And of course, the OT altar points us to the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus. The one who makes black and white, rich and poor, male and female, Presbyterian and Baptist, one. One under God. So, we might walk in His ways.

And by walking in God's ways, in the ways of truth and unity, a crisis is averted. By listening to one another they hear from each other the same concern to love the Lord their God. Truth is important. Worshipping God is paramount. And so is the unity of God's people. Unity under the Lord. To win the war as well as the battle God's people would need

Slide 14

3. To love and to walk and **thirdly to serve. (Joshua 23:1-5)**

For we now turn to Joshua 23 and we find *"After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: "I am very old. You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you. Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain."*

There is something special about people's last words. The Bible records for us what Jacob, Joseph, Moses and David said just prior to when they die. Just a couple of weeks ago US preacher Tim Keller died and his last words were *"There is no downside for me leaving, not in the slightest."* Add that to what he said when he was diagnosed with cancer back in 2021, *"It is endlessly comforting to have a God who is both infinitely more wise and more loving than I am."*

Well Joshua is now old, very old but his faith is still fresh and vital and he is still seeking to serve his Lord. He's not retiring up the coast and living just for his weekly game of bowls and his time with the family. He still wants to encourage his people and make sure they don't win the battle and lose the war. In effect he is saying *"Remember how I served. Now you go out and serve. Remember the God that we serve, he is worthy of our service. Press on. Press on in the Lord's service."*

Slide 15

Friends, Christians don't ever retire from serving the Lord. Yes, their service may look a bit different at different stages of their lives. Certainly, circumstances change energy levels and capacity may require a change of pace, even of role, but you never stop serving the Lord. Not when you go to university or when you start work, not when you start a family, not when stop work, not even when your health fails. We are all to keep on loving the Lord, walking in his ways and serving him with all your heart and mind.

Which means if we are not serving him now, there is something wrong. For there is a lot of hard work in serving the Lord and serving your brothers and sisters in Christ but in the words of Paul directed to the deacons in 1 Timothy 3, *"those who serve well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."*

So why do we find in the Christian community that some serve wholeheartedly and others seem to be missing in action? I think it is because some grasp the servant nature of their Saviour. Jesus picked up the basin and the towel and he washed his disciple's feet. Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom to others. You see those who understand the nature of God, the servant King, look for ways to serve the Lord & their fellow brothers and sisters with all that they have. While others are yet to grasp both the true nature of God and they haven't learnt as yet the joys & rewards of serving the Lord with all they have

Slide 16

4. To love, to walk, to serve and **fourthly to keep his commands (Joshua 23:6-7)**

⁶ "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. "

God's army must obey the instructions of their commanding officer. Throughout the book of Joshua, we see that when God's people follow God's word, they win the victory over their enemies. But in peacetime

they need to learn those same lessons again and again. When God's people follow God's word, they also win the victory in the battle that is raging within them. The battle of who will we put number 1 in our lives? God or money? The Lord or ourselves? Selfishness or service? Winning the war will involve

Slide 17

5. Living, walking, serving, keeping and lastly **holding fast to Him. (Joshua 23:8-16)**

For where are we going to get the love that we need to love the Lord and where are we going to get the fitness we will need to walk in his ways, and where will we get the reserves that we need to serve and keep serving, but only through holding fast onto the Lord.

Only through super gluing ourselves to Him. The same word here translated hold fast is the word used in Genesis 2:24 about the man "holding fast to his wife", clinging to her, sticking fast to her, becoming one flesh with her. When a bone breaks within our bodies, doctors might have to operate on the break, pin it back together and then over time I believe, it actually heals even stronger than what it was before the break.

In the same way our heavenly surgeon has brought man and himself back together after the break caused by sin and the call is to remain close to him. To hold fast to him. To become one with Him. And how do we do that? Well Joshua tells us to remember what God has done for you. Remember what God has given you. Remember what God has promised you & live in the light of all these things.

You see forgetfulness is the enemy of faith. Godliness instead feeds on the promises of faith. After the battle is over there are still in Joshua's words snares and traps, whips and thorns. But the Lord is the one who will hold you securely by your hand. Just as a parent holds their son or daughter's hands and never let's go, so God holds our hands. And yes, the child might think they are holding their parent's hand but it is not really up to the child, the reason the two are still connected is because the stronger one just refuses to let go of the weaker one.

Slide 18

History would prove how appropriate this warning would be from Joshua. In the very next book in the Bible, in the book of Judges we read that "*The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things that the Lord had done for Israel.*" But after his death they did evil in the eyes of the Lord and worshipped the Baals.

Slide 19

As the saying goes the Church is only one generation away from extinction. We must pass the baton of faith onto the next generation. It would be crazy for us to think that because we have won a few battles that the war is also won. Just look at our families, there are people close to us who have walked away from the faith. Look at our communities, there is a widespread neglect of the things of the faith. Just look at our world there is war and greed running rampant and just look at the Church, we are wracked with false teaching and wrong worship, we are divided over many things, there are many not holding fast to the Lord and so many of us are not walking in God's ways.

Slide 20

Listen how the apostle Paul puts it "*8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*"

Slide 21

What are those good works you and I were created to do? Well like these stories in Joshua 22 & 23 they flow out of our love for the Lord, as we walk in obedience to him, keeping his commands, hold fast to him and serving Him with all our heart and all our soul. That's our calling. That's what godliness looks like. Anything less than that, is seeing the battle around us being won and then realising that because of our neglect, we have actually lost the war.

Song – Cling to Christ [Cling to Christ • Official Lyric Video on Vimeo](#)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Father, I can come to You
 And boast of deeds I've done
 In my pride I strive to earn
 The favour Christ has won
 He alone pleads my acceptance
 All my works aside
 So I come with empty hands
 And I cling to Christ</p> | <p>Chorus
 It's more than I can do
 It's more than I can do
 To keep my hold on You
 But all my hope and peace
 Is that You cling to me</p> |
| <p>2. Father, I can go astray
 And battle needless fears
 Voices tell me I'm condemned
 And that I can't draw near
 But Your Spirit calls me homeward
 With Your words of life
 Jesus bore my every sin
 So, I cling to Christ</p> | <p>3. Father, all my earthly aims
 In time will turn to dust
 Let me learn that loss is gain
 For those who know Your love
 All the treasures of this world
 Will never satisfy
 You alone are endless joy
 So, I cling to Christ</p> |

Benediction

“But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Joshua 22:5)