



## Sermon, Sunday September 18, 2022

### “The Promises of the Lord Are Sure to be Fulfilled”

**SCRIPTURE: Joshua 23:1-16** <sup>1</sup> A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies all around and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, <sup>2</sup> Joshua summoned all Israel, their elders and heads, their judges and officers, and said to them, “I am now old and well advanced in years, <sup>3</sup> and you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you. <sup>4</sup> I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. <sup>5</sup> The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight, and you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore be very steadfast to observe and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right nor to the left, <sup>7</sup> so that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow yourselves down to them, <sup>8</sup> but hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. <sup>9</sup> For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations, and as for you, no one has been able to withstand you to this day. <sup>10</sup> One of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, as he promised you. <sup>11</sup> Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. <sup>12</sup> For if you turn back and join the survivors of these nations left here among you and intermarry with them, so that you marry their women and they yours, <sup>13</sup> know assuredly that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you. <sup>14</sup> “And now 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 thing has 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. <sup>15</sup> But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the bad things until he has destroyed you from this good land that the LORD your God has given you. <sup>16</sup> If you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he enjoined on you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land that he has given to you.”

#### Introduction: Misunderstanding of the book of Joshua

The Bible we value is comprised of 66 books with various authors, genres, styles, and written intents. Today's text, the book of Joshua, describes the process of the Israelites' conquest of Canaan and the distribution of the land of Canaan. However, we often misunderstand the purpose of the writing of the book of Joshua. For us to understand Joshua properly, we must read Joshua it from the perspective of the fulfillment of God's promises and God's grace toward the people of Israel.

If we only view the book of Joshua from the perspective of the Israelites' victory in the battle for conquest of Canaan and God's blessing on the Israelites who were chosen by the Lord, we cannot know the true purpose of the writing of the book of Joshua.

The book of Joshua clearly shows how God's promise to their ancestors of the Israelites who settled in Canaan was fulfilled. And in the process, the book of Joshua proclaims the grace of the Lord that the people of Israel received. So, the fulfillment of the promise and the grace of the Lord are the most important key words in our understanding of the book of Joshua. If we look at the book of Joshua only from the perspective of the



Israelites' victory in the war to conquer Canaan and the Lord's blessings on the chosen people of Israel, there is a danger of becoming seized by success-oriented or exclusive-choice ideas.

Today's text, Joshua chapter 23, is the conclusion of the book of Joshua. Chapter 23 is Joshua's farewell sermon to the leaders of Israel. Joshua reminds the leaders of all the tribes of Israel what the Lord has done to Israel. And Joshua gives a lesson for the Israelites who will live in Canaan as the owner of the Promised Land.

What, then, is Joshua's final admonition for the Israelites?

### **Body: Joshua's Last Admonition for the People of Israel**

Above all, Joshua recommends three ways for the people of Israel to live a blessed life in the land of Canaan. First, he commands the Israelites to keep the word of God and do it. Today's text, Joshua 23:6, says; **"Therefore be very steadfast to observe and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right nor to the left."**

It was only when the Israelites obeyed the word of the Lord that they were able to overcome all the challenges in the process of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, their journey in the wilderness, and the war to conquer Canaan. When the people of Israel obeyed the word of the Lord, the Lord overcame instead of all the challenges faced by the people of Israel. That is why the Bible describes the Lord as **"the God who fights for the people of Israel." (V. 3, 10)**

What we should not forget during the war to conquer Canaan, which the book of Joshua shows, is that the protagonist of this war of conquest is the Lord, not the Israelites. The fact that the main character is the Lord means that we have nothing to brag about for the world. Because everything is the Lord's merit (grace), we, the Lord's people, should be humbler before the Lord and our neighbors.

We must not forget that the Israelites were able to occupy the land of Canaan not because they were superior or special to the people of Canaan, but because of the grace of the Lord.

What, then, is Joshua's second exhortation for the people of Israel? **Let's look at the words of today's text, verse 23:8. "But hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day."** Joshua's second exhortation for the Israelites is to draw close to the Lord.

When the people of Israel had a deep and intimate fellowship with the Lord, they were united in faith to solve problems found in community and overcome external challenges. Many examples of this are found during the Israelites' life in the wilderness and during the war to conquer Canaan.

The same applies to us. If we live with spiritual sensitivity through closeness to the Lord, we can overcome the problems we face in life. However, if we do not maintain a close relationship with the Lord, we will resort to worldly methods (money, fame, power) rather than religious methods to solve problems we encounter. The result, of course, is destruction.

**Today's text Joshua 23:11 tells us. "Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God."** We should always check to see if our hearts are truly loving the Lord. When our sense of righteousness and merit disappears from our hearts, our hearts are filled with the grace of the Lord. We have gratitude and praise in our hearts filled with the grace of the Lord.

Finally, Joshua commands the Israelites not to worship idols through **today's text 23:7 which says; "So that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow yourselves down to them."**



My dear brothers and sisters! What do you think the Bible says about idols? The Bible says that if there is something we love more than God, it is an idol. Do we have an idol we love more than God? If there is anything we love more than God, we are now bound by idols.

There were so many things that tempted the Israelites in the land of Canaan. In fact, But when the Israelites were living in the wilderness, there were not many things around them to take their hearts away. This is because the wilderness is a very difficult place to live, and it is impossible to live without relying on God. However, unlike the wilderness, Canaan, where the Israelites settled and lived, is a land flowing with milk and honey. In other words, there are many idols that will steal our hearts and the people of Israel.

Therefore, living in the world, if we are not careful, we can easily fall for the world's temptations. The human heart always longs to be filled with something. If we do not love God, our hearts are filled with love for the world.

Also, if we say that we serve God, but we depend on something other than God, then we are serving an idol. Idols may give us temporary satisfaction, but they cannot fill our hearts completely and fully. In the end, idols take away our freedom and give us greater deprivation.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

I have a few questions for you. What is preventing you from reading the Bible, the word of the Lord? What is preventing you from praying? And what is preventing you from trying to live according to the will of the Lord?

Please don't forget. If there is an element that hinders us from drawing close to the Lord to bear abundant fruit in our religious life, we must cut it off. Joshua told the Israelites to draw near to God and avoid idols. We, too, must be able to discern what should be near and what should be far away. I hope that we will all be able to cut off the obstacles to drawing closer to the Lord and draw closer to Him.

### **Conclusion: The Lord Fulfills His Promises**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. The reason that the 12 tribes of Israel were able to secure a proper territory after successfully completing the war to conquer Canaan was not because of the superiority of the people of Israel, but because of the infinite grace of the Lord.

Joshua exhorts the Israelites to obey the Lord's word with humility and to always be alert and spiritually sensitive by drawing near to the Lord. And furthermore, he strongly commands not to worship idols.

The Lord is the one who always fulfills the promises He has made with us. Today's book of Joshua was written to show us that fact. And we must not forget that the protagonist of the book of Joshua is the Lord, not the Israelites who won the war of conquest, nor the outstanding leader Joshua. Therefore, we should be able to wait with humility and love for the Lord as we wait for His promises to be fulfilled in our lives. I sincerely hope this blessing will come to all of us. Amen!

