

Remember and Choose

Joshua 24:1-15

PW Emerson – 01/27/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

Setting ...

Joshua has been leading the people for 40 years.

He is very old and knows he won't be around much longer.

Joshua

- Has been with the people as slaves in Egypt
- Was present during the 10 plagues God used to get through to Pharaoh
- Was present during the parting of the Red Sea
- Wandered around the wilderness for 40 years
- Led the people into the promised land

He saw times

- When the people strongly followed God
- And times when they pursued other Gods

So now, near his end, he gives a speech to the people ... almost a farewell speech.

Joshua 24:1-15

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods.³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him

throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, ⁴and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.

⁵“Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. ⁶When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. ⁷But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

⁸“I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land.⁹When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. ¹⁰But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹“Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. ¹²I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. ¹³So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

¹⁴“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

REMEMBER ...

So often in the history of the Israelites, it seems like they had short-term memory loss

After God freed the people from slavery in Egypt AND parted the Red Sea so they could escape the pursuing Egyptian army, they went to Mt. Saini.

While Moses was on top of the mountain with God, receiving the 10 commandments, the people got scared and made a golden calf ...

They quickly forgot God's hand interceding for them in incredible ways.

I wish I could say that's the only time that happened, but it's not.

That story of forgetting all that God has done seems to be the story of the Israelites

The book of Judges tells of

- The people in bondage
- Calling out to God for help
- God raises up someone as a leader (judge) to help free the people
- People are freed and live right until that judge dies
- Then the people fall away
- God allows the people to be taken over by outsiders

And that starts the cycle again.

The cycle happened 12 times in the book of Judges!

And that behavior didn't end there

Joshua beseeches the people not to forget all that God has done for them

WE need to remember what God has done for us!!

We find it too easy to say “WOE IS ME!”

This bad thing is happening!

Why is God doing this to me!!

Instead of remembering the multitude of times God

- Spoke to us
- Interceded for us

Maybe ... just maybe ... the “bad thing” happening

- Has a greater purpose

Or maybe you’re in a bad situation because you did something that brought you there!

God doesn’t wake up and wonder, “How can I make them suffer today?”

God loves us!

Never Forget

In the early 1970, there was an old man, retired, living in Florida. And every morning he would go to the beach with a bucket of shrimp and feed the sea gulls. One day someone asked him why he did that. He told them his story.

Many years before, in October, 1942, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was on a mission in a B-17 to deliver an important message to General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea. But there was an unexpected detour which would hurl Captain Eddie into the most harrowing adventure of his life.

Somewhere over the South Pacific the Flying Fortress became lost beyond the reach of radio. Fuel ran dangerously low, so the men ditched their plane in the ocean... For nearly a month Captain Eddie and his companions would fight the water, and the weather, and the scorching sun. They spent many sleepless nights recoiling as giant sharks rammed their rafts. The largest raft was nine by five. The biggest shark...ten feet long.

But of all their enemies at sea, one proved most formidable: starvation. Eight days out, their rations were long gone or destroyed by the salt water. It would take a miracle to sustain them. And a miracle occurred. In Captain Eddie's own words, "Cherry," that was the B- 17 pilot, Captain William Cherry, "read the service that afternoon, and we finished with a prayer for deliverance and a hymn of praise. There was some talk, but it tapered off in the oppressive heat. With my hat pulled down over my eyes to keep out some of the glare, I dozed off."

"Something landed on my head. I knew that it was a sea gull. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. Everyone else knew too. No one said a word, but peering out from under my hat brim without moving my head, I could see the expression on their faces. They were staring at that gull. The gull meant food...if I could catch it." And the rest, as they say, is history. Captain Eddie caught the gull. Its flesh was eaten. Its intestines were used for bait to catch fish. The survivors were sustained and their hopes renewed because a lone sea gull, uncharacteristically hundreds of miles from land, offered itself as a sacrifice. You know that Captain Eddie made it. And now you also know...that he never forgot.

We need to remember ...

- The times when God provided this or that in our lives
- The times when we were so worried about our kids doing something ... and everything worked out fine because God was with them

- That God has brought people into our lives, the right people at the right time
- That God saved us when we least deserved it

I Corinthians 11:2 The Apostle Paul said

I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you.

Just as Joshua implored the people to remember all God had done for them,
We need to remember ALL that God has done for us!

The people were united saying that they would serve God completely!

So Joshua made a covenant, for the people, with God.

We read in verse 1 that this took place at Shechem.

Why is that noted?

Because in Genesis 35:4, it says that is the place with Jacob and his family forsook the other gods, determined to follow the one true God.

Genesis 35:4

⁴So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem

In hopes of things sticking with the people better, Joshua makes a covenant between God and the people.

Joshua 24:21-25

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD."

²² Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

²³ "Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

Just Joshua had the people choose, it's time for us to choose.

Remembering what God has done for us, what are we going to do?

- Will we make God a priority in our lives?
- Will we read the bible or leave it on the shelf to collect dust?
- Will we love our neighbor, not just once in a while, but on a daily basis?
- When we are having a bad day and our world seems to crumble, will we turn to God or things of this world?
- Will we seek out God more?
- Will we ask God to reveal his will for our lives?
- Will we obey when God calls us to serve him?

We have often noted that names in the bible have meaning.

Joshua means “God Saves”

I don't think it was an accident that the person giving the speech in Joshua 24 was named to remind people that they are saved by God.

John 6:66-68

⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

For each of us I pray the same as the twelve, that we realize and act on God, the only one with the words of eternal life.

Take a moment and remember the many times God has interceded for you or blessed you.

Let us together make a covenant with God.

I have put this piece together, from passages from a number of people and places in the bible.

To the creator of the heavens and the earth,

I will listen to you and seek you out. I will cherish your words and your presence. I will cling to you through the good and the bad. I will look for opportunities to show your love in the world. I will put nothing before you in my life. Although there are many things of this world vying for my attention, I will not let them distract me from you. As for me and my house, I will serve the Lord.

Amen