

JOSHUA 24:14-25 AND 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16

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THE DAY BECAME A NATIONAL HOLIDAY THE FOLLOWING YEAR, AND ITS NAME WAS EVENTUALLY CHANGED TO VETERAN'S DAY.

HERE ARE A COUPLE OF QUOTES FROM VETERAN'S OF OUR MILITARY SERVICE: A LATE PRESIDENT, WHO SERVED IN THE NAVY DURING WWII SPOKE ABOUT THE DAY SAYING-

“AS WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE, WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT THE HIGHEST APPRECIATION IS NOT TO UTTER WORDS, BUT TO LIVE BY THEM.”

A RETIRED GENERAL STATED- “TRUE COURAGE IS BEING AFRAID, AND GOING AHEAD AND DOING YOUR JOB.”

THESE WORDS FROM THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR OUR NATION HAVE WISDOM FOR US TODAY, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE THEY COME FROM THOSE WHO PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE FOR US AND OUR COUNTRY.

THERE ARE MANY VETERANS IN THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE, WHO FOUGHT BOTH WITH MILITARY ARMS AND SPIRITUAL RESOURCES.

SOME OF THEIR WORDS, WHICH ARE FOUND IN THE BIBLE, CAN ALSO BE HELPFUL TO US TODAY.

JOSHUA, WAS BOTH A VETERAN OF MILITARY BATTLES, AS WELL AS SPIRITUAL ONES.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA, CHAPTER 24 OPENS WITH THE ISRAELITES VICTORIOUS OVER ALL OF THEIR ENEMIES.

THE LAND HAS BEEN CONQUERED AND THE PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO SETTLE DOWN IN PEACE.

BUT JOSHUA WANTS THEM TO UNDERSTAND THEY ALSO NEED TO MAINTAIN PEACE WITH GOD, AND WITH ONE ANOTHER.

HIS WORDS REMIND THE PEOPLE THAT IF THEY LOSE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, WHO WAS REALLY THE ONE WHO MADE THEM VICTORIOUS, THEY WILL LOSE THE WAR.

JOSHUA, IS NOW AN OLD MAN, WHO HAS SEEN A LOT IN HIS LIFETIME.

HE WAS BORN INTO SLAVERY IN EGYPT, WAS BOTH A GENERAL AND FIGHTER OF MANY MILITARY BATTLES, AND HE IS ABOUT TO DIE IN FREEDOM IN THE PROMISED LAND.

BUT HE KNOWS, AND WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT FREEDOM MUST NOT BE NEGLECTED IN PEACETIME.

HE ALERTS THEM THERE IS A SPIRITUAL BATTLE THAT CONTINUES, WHICH INVOLVES HOW THEY USE THEIR FREEDOM.

JOSHUA KNOWS THAT WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE LORD GOD, THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN VICTORIOUS.

FURTHERMORE, WITHOUT GOD'S HELP THEY WILL NOT HOLD ONTO IT THE LAND THE LORD HAS GIVEN TO THEM.

THUS THE SECURITY OF THE NATION AND THE PEOPLE WILL NOW BE DETERMINED BY HOW THEY CHOOSE TO LIVE.

JOSHUA ALSO KNOWS THE PEOPLE HAVE NOT ALWAYS MADE GOOD CHOICES DURING THE EXODUS JOURNEY, OR DURING THEIR FIGHT TO CONQUER THE PROMISED LAND.

THEIR PRESENT AND FUTURE IS IN QUESTION DEPENDING UPON WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL RECONFIRM THEIR PLEDGE TO WORSHIP GOD ALONE, AND OBEY HIM.

BUT WORDS WILL NOT BE ENOUGH HE REMINDS THEM, THEY MUST ALSO CHOOSE TO LIVE BY THE VOWS THEY MAKE.

SO JOSHUA REMINDS THEM ABOUT WHO GOD IS AND WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR THEM.

THE CHAPTER BEGINS WITH HIM RECALLING THE STORY OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS SINCE THE TIME OF ABRAHAM TO THE PRESENT DAY.

HE KNOWS MANY AMONG THEM HAVE WAIVERED IN COMMITTING FULLY TO THE LORD GOD, WHO IS THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD.

AFTER REVIEWING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO THEIR ANCESTORS AND TO THEM, JOSHUA TELLS THEM HOW TO HONOR THE SACRIFICES OF THE PAST, AS WELL AS GOD'S CONTINUING LOVE TOWARDS THEM.

"NOW THEREFORE, FEAR THE LORD AND SERVE HIM IN FAITHFULNESS. PUT AWAY THE GODS OF YOUR ANCESTORS...AND SERVE THE LORD.

IF YOU ARE UNWILLING TO SERVE THE LORD, CHOOSE TODAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE...BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSEHOLD WE WILL SERVE THE LORD."

THIS WAS A DEFINING MOMENT FOR THE ISRAELITES. WOULD THEY ALLOW GOD TO CONTINUE TO BLESS THEM, OR WOULD THEY CAST ASIDE THE LORD FOR IDOLS?

JOSHUA MAKES IT CLEAR THEY CANNOT DO BOTH. THUS THE CONTINUING APOSTASY AND IDOLATRY THAT MANY OF THEM ARE PRACTICING MUST END.

THEREFORE, EACH OF THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE LIVING GOD AND LIFELESS IDOLS.

THE SIN OF THE ISRAELITES IN NOT COMMITTING FULLY TO GOD, AND THE CHOICE THEY MUST NOW MAKE, IS THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE PASSAGE, AND JOSHUA'S MESSAGE.

INDEED, THE PHYSICAL WAR HAS BEEN WON, BUT THE SPIRITUAL WAR WILL CONTINUE.

THE CHOICE THEY WERE CALLED TO MAKE WAS A MAJOR BATTLE IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GOD AND IDOLS, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SINFULNESS.

AND UPON THE ANSWER GIVEN BY EACH PERSON AND HOUSEHOLD, LAY WHETHER OR NOT THE SACRIFICES OF THE PAST WOULD BE IN VAIN.

HOW THEN WILL THE ISRAELITES USE THE FREEDOM GOD HAS GIVEN THEM?

WILL THEY CHOOSE, IN ACTION, AS WELL AS WORDS, THE GOD WHO FIRST CHOSE THEM; OR WILL THEY CHOOSE SOME OTHER DEITY, THING, OR PERSON TO WORSHIP AND OBEY?

THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE AND THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD BOTH SHOW THAT IT IS FAR EASIER TO MAKE AN OATH OF LOYALTY, TO PROMISE FAITHFULNESS, THAN TO LIVE IT.

IN TRUTH, ONE'S CONFESSION OF FAITH IN GOD, AND DESIRE TO WORSHIP AND OBEY THE LORD IS A CHOICE WE MUST CONTINUALLY MAKE.

PART OF THIS CHOOSING, IS A WILLINGNESS TO ADMIT AND REPENT OF SIN AND RETURN TO GOD.

EACH DAY, AND ON OCCASION- SEVERAL TIMES A DAY, WE ALSO MUST MAKE THE CHOICE TO SERVE GOD OR NOT.

WE ARE CALLED TO DECIDE TO WHOM OR WHAT WILL OUR WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE BE GIVEN: GOD, OR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE ELSE?

MAY WE REMEMBER THAT OUR IDOLS ARE NOT STATUES, BUT MORE OFTEN PEOPLE. OR CULTURAL VALUES, PRIDE, GREED, WORLDLY POWER, AND SO FORTH.

TO PURSUE ANY OF THOSE THINGS IN PREFERENCE TO GOD, OR AT THE EXPENSE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, IS THE KIND OF SIN WARNED AGAINST BY JOSHUA'S WORDS, GIVEN TO HIM BY THE LORD.

THANKFULLY, GOD, THROUGH CHRIST HAS PROVIDED US WITH A REMEDY FOR HIS PROMISED VENGEANCE, BY FREEING US FROM THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SIN, WHEN WE REPENT.

THE POWER OF GOD'S GRACE PROVIDED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, AS WELL AS OUR OWN CALL TO ARMS IS DESCRIBED IN A VERSE OF AN OLD HYMN:

“ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS, MARCHING AS TO WAR WITH THE CROSS OF JESUS, GOING ON BEFORE.

CHRIST OUR ROYAL MASTER, LEADS AGAINST THE FOE; FORWARD INTO BATTLE, SEE HIS BANNER GO.”

THE APOSTLE PAUL UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THIS ONGOING SPIRITUAL BATTLE IN THE WAR BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, GOD AND SATAN.

INDEED, HE WAS BOTH A VETERAN OF SPIRITUAL BATTLES, AS WELL AS STILL A SOLDIER IN THE ONGOING CONFLICT.

PAUL DESCRIBED TO THE CHRISTIANS OF EPHEBUS HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THE WARFARE ALL BELIEVERS ARE ENGAGED IN DURING OUR EARTHLY LIVES, OR UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS.

IN EPHESIANS 6:12 HE PROCLAIMED: “FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST ENEMIES OF BLOOD AND FLESH, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES, AGAINST THE COSMIC POWERS OF THE PRESENT DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL...”

THIS IS THE CONTEXT OF THE WORDS HE WROTE ABOUT FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

IN TODAY'S EPISTLE READING, PAUL AN OLD MAN, REMINDS THE YOUTHFUL TIMOTHY THAT HE, AND THE PEOPLE HE PASTORS, ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN THIS FIGHT.

THE STRUGGLE MAY TAKE MANY FORMS: PERSECUTION, FALSE TEACHINGS, APATHY, TEMPTATION, AND CORRUPTION, ARE JUST SOME EXAMPLES.

THEREFORE, CHRISTIANS MUST BE PREPARED TO, RETREAT WHEN NECESSARY, AND AT OTHER TIMES STAND OUR GROUND.

WE ARE EVEN REMINDED THAT WE SHOULD TAKE THE OFFENSIVE WHEN THAT IS THE BEST MOVE TO MAKE, IN OUR GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

INDEED IN HIS LETTER, PAUL ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS TO NOT BE IDLE OR COMPLACENT, BUT TO ENGAGE THE ENEMY, BY TAKING HOLD OF ETERNAL LIFE.

THIS IS THE LIFE JESUS HAS ALREADY WON FOR US, BUT WHICH THE ENEMY WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK TO PULL US AWAY FROM.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE ARE CALLED TO BE ACTIVE IN OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LORD BY HOW WE LIVE.

THIS INVOLVES A RECOGNITION THERE ARE TIMES THIS MAY BE AN UPHILL BATTLE BETWEEN FAITH AND DOUBT.

WE TOO ARE CALLED TO CHOOSE “THIS DAY” AND EVERYDAY WHOM WE WILL SERVE, CHRIST JESUS OUR SAVIOR AND GOD OR AN IDOL OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER.

TRULY, ANY PERSON, OR ANY IDEA, OR MATERIAL THING THAT DRAWS US AWAY FROM GOD CREATES A CONFLICT OF SORTS.

AS SOMEONE ELSE WROTE ABOUT OUR STRUGGLE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL:

“THE CHRISTIAN FAITH DOES NOT OFFER A HOPE OF LIFE ON EARTH WITHOUT EVIL. INSTEAD, THE CHRISTIAN FAITH CALLS US TO FIGHT EVIL WITH GOOD....”

IN MANY WAYS FIGHTING EVIL WITH GOOD IS THE REAL CHALLENGE.

AFTER ALL, IT IS MUCH EASIER TO FIGHT EVIL WITH EVIL, AND YET DOING SO GIVES EVIL A VICTORY NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME.

LET US THEREFORE HEED THE WORDS OF BOTH JOSHUA AND PAUL, WHO WERE EACH VETERANS OF MANY BATTLES.

THROUGH SCRIPTURE, THEIR MESSAGE IS NOW FOR WE WHO ARE IN THE MIDST OF THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT THAT CONTINUES TO GRIP THE WORLD.

OUR CHOICE OF WHOSE SIDE WE WILL BE ON IS KEY. MAY WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO GRASP HOLD OF FAITH AND NOT LET GO.

THIS, OF COURSE, FOR MANY OF US, IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE. HOWEVER, LET US BE ENCOURAGED BY REMEMBERING THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S NOT OURS.

INDEED, WE HAVE THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS STRUGGLE, AS WELL AS FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

AND, THERE IS YET ONE MORE MAJOR POINT TO REMEMBER- THE WAR HAS ALREADY BEEN WON BY JESUS ON THE CROSS AND THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION.

WHILE THERE HAS NOT YET BEEN A SURRENDER OF THE ENEMY- THE OUTCOME IS INEVITABLE.

A SONG WRITTEN BY AN AMERICAN HYMNIST BY THE NAME OF E. M. BARTLETT DESCRIBES THIS TRUTH:

"I HEARD AN OLD, OLD STORY, HOW A SAVIOR CAME FROM GLORY, HOW HE GAVE HIS LIFE ON CALVARY TO SAVE A WRETCH LIKE ME; I HEARD ABOUT HIS GROANING, OF HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD'S ATONING, THEN I REPENTED OF MY SINS AND WON THE VICTORY.

O VICTORY IN JESUS, MY SAVIOR, FOREVER. HE SOUGHT ME AND BOUGHT ME WITH HIS REDEEMING BLOOD; HE LOVED ME ERE I KNEW HIM AND ALL MY LOVE IS DUE HIM. HE PLUNGED ME TO VICTORY, BENEATH THE CLEANSING FLOOD."

LET US REMEMBER GOD'S POWERFUL ACT ON OUR BEHALF AND HOLD ONTO CHRIST'S PROMISE TO BE WITH US ALWAYS.

LET US DAILY CHOOSE TO FOLLOW THE GOD WHO FIRST CHOSE US, AND CONTINUE TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH, IN WHICH EVIL IS CONQUERED BY GOOD, HATE BY LOVE, AND SIN BY REDEMPTION.

LET US PRAY:

YOUR LOVE HAS BROUGHT US TOGETHER, O LORD, AND IT IS YOUR LOVE THAT SUSTAINS US THROUGH EACH DAY. WE PRAY THAT YOU WOULD KEEP US FAITHFUL.

STRENGTHEN US TO WORK WITH YOU TO BRING ABOUT, HERE AND NOW, YOUR REIGN ON EARTH.

GIVE US THE COURAGE TO WITNESS TO YOUR PRESENCE IN THE WORLD-TODAY, TOMORROW, AND INTO THE FUTURE. WE PRAY IN THE NAME OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR. AMEN.

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THOUGHT FOR TODAY, BY S. SWEENEY

THOSE OF US WHO HAVE NEVER SERVED  
WILL NEVER FULLY UNDERSTAND  
THE SACRIFICE YOU'VE MADE  
BOTH IN TIMES OF PEACE AND WAR.

WE WILL NEVER FULLY UNDERSTAND  
WHAT YOU WERE REQUIRED TO DO  
OR HOW YOU WERE ABLE TO DO IT.

WE WILL NEVER FULLY UNDERSTAND  
THE DEPTH OF YOUR SCARS.

BUT WE CAN OFFER YOU THIS: WE SEE YOU.  
WE RECOGNIZE YOUR HUMANITY.

AND WE SEND YOU LOVE THAT IS GENTLE,  
PATIENT AND HEALING.

WITH BLESSINGS AND GRATITUDE,  
WE ASK THAT YOU REMEMBER YOU ARE LOVED.

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