

Challenge, Change, and Choice

Joshua 24:1 – 15

I. Intro

- A. For a person who's made the choice to surrender their hearts, lives to Christ as Lord and Savior, like the Israelites when freed from Egyptian captivity and wandering in wilderness for 40 years before finally able to enter the Promised Land, there will be battles to fight, there will be victories won, there will be challenges, changes, and daily choices to be made
- B. A.W. Tozier quote: *The man or woman who is wholly and joyously surrendered to Christ can't make a wrong choice – any choice will be the right choice.*
- C. Billy Graham quote: *"The strongest principle of life and blessings lies in our choice. Our life is the sum result of all the choices we make, both consciously and unconsciously. If we can control the process of choosing, we can take control of all aspects of our life. We can find the freedom that comes from being in charge of our life. So choose what is right rather than what is acceptable.
"If you don't make a decision, then time will make it for you, and time will always side against you."*
- D. However, whatever choices we make – wrong or right, all along the way God is there continually bringing to fulfillment His covenant promise
- E. **Question:** What is that covenant promise? To bless as we are obedient and faithful, and through His Son to bring us to that eternal Promised Land – His presence forever
- F. In passage, Joshua is nearing end of his life; calls all people of Israel together to give one last message from God – a message of encouragement, and also a message of challenge, of change, and choice

II. The Challenge (v. 1 - 12)

- A. **READ Joshua 24:1 - 12**
- B. Look at some of challenges faced by Israelites entering into land given to them by God – land flowing with milk and honey, a choice land, a land where they would thrive and be provided for and where God would be present with them IF they followed His commandments
- C. ****SLIDE ** 1 – Living Among Godless (v. 2, 3)**
 - i. Notice **v. 3:** God said, *I took your father Abraham from the land ... led him throughout Canaan ... gave him many descendants*
 - ii. When God first called out His people to be chosen, holy nation they were “smack-dab” in the middle of a godless, evil, corrupt people

- iii. **God brought them out, led them to promise of new life, life of peace and rest, a life of abundant blessings where God would be their God and they would be God's people**
 - iv. **We face this same challenge – we live in a godless, evil, corrupt world but God has promised deliverance through His Son, Jesus Christ; as we are obedient, faithful through blessing of salvation, we will be given new life, life of peace and rest, of abundant blessings where Spirit of God is present with and in us – as long we will live in this godless, evil, corrupt world and then for all eternity**
 - v. **1 John 2:15-17 (NIV)** ¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.
- D. **** SLIDE ** 2 – Living in Captivity (v. 4 - 7)**
- i. **Reason why God's people were oppressed and living as captives in Egypt was because of their own rebellion and disobedience**
 - ii. **Again, God was merciful and freed them from their captivity**
 - iii. **Notice v. 7: Just when it looked as if the Egyptians would overtake the fleeing Israelites ... *they cried to the Lord for help***
 - iv. **There are many living in captivity today – oppressed and held captive by sin – sin of worldly pursuits, of greed, of lust, of addiction, of hatred and bitterness, of self-gratification and self-preservation, of rebellion against God and His Son**
 - v. **But God is gracious and God is merciful and provided a way to freedom from this captivity**
 - vi. **Jesus' words: John 8:34-36 (NIV)** ³⁴ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
- E. **** SLIDE ** 3 – Living in Uncertain Times (v. 7b)**
- i. **v. 7b: ... *you lived in the desert for a long time***
 - ii. **Again, Israelites found themselves wandering in desert wilderness for 40 years because of the lack of faith and trust in God; they THOUGHT they knew a better way to live – to the point of even believing their life of captivity was better than living in uncertainty**
 - iii. **Question: Anyone ever lived in desert environment? Can't imagine too pleasant – dry, dusty, hot, sand everywhere (going to beach), water and food both are scarce**

- iv. **But God ultimately brings them home; and even when their enemies threaten (v. 8 – 12) and attack them, God fights for them and gives them victory as they follow and let Him lead them**
 - v. **But when God's people tried to take the lead and do things their own way, they were defeated every time**
 - vi. **We are living in uncertain times, there is no doubt; but we have a home in the presence of God and His Holy Spirit and He will conquer the enemy of His people (Satan) and will fight for us and give us victory in the battles if we will follow Him and let His Spirit lead us – we can be certain of this, those victories in battles of this life ultimately lead to final victory He's already won in this war between righteous and unrighteous, good and evil**
 - vii. **John 16:33 (NIV)** ³³ "... In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
 - viii. **1 John 5:4-5 (NIV)**
⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.
- F. **The challenges God's people faced are the same challenges we face today – living among godless and corrupt people, many living in captivity, living in uncertain times; but God can change it all**

III. **The Change (v. 13)**

- A. **READ v. 13:** God tells His people here *I have given you what you didn't have to work for, I've given you what you couldn't earn, I've given you what you didn't deserve – I've given you a changed life*
- B. **When God sent His Only Son into this evil, sinful world among evil, sinful people like you and me – Jesus told us about this change that God in His love, mercy, and grace freely offers to all people: John 3:16 (NIV)** ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
- C. **Paul said it this way: 1 Corinthians 15:10 (NIV)** ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. ...; **Paul said when God poured out His grace upon him through salvation in Jesus Christ there was a drastic and dramatic change that took place in his life – His grace to me was not without effect; Paul also said God's grace is sufficient for me**
- D. **** SLIDE ** Question:** What's the change? A new life in God's presence through believing in Jesus Christ

IV. The Choice (v. 14, 15)

- A. **READ Joshua 24:14, 15**
- B. If you've experienced a pouring out of God's grace upon your life through salvation in Christ as Lord and Savior the choice is what God tells people of Israel in v. 14 – *fear the Lord, serve Him with all faithfulness, throw away other gods* we may be worshiping in our lives; this is the choice we **MUST** make in order for God to work His change in us
- C. With the Israelites there was never any question on the choice they were faced with – *choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve* – little gods (gods of this world) which are not really “gods” at all, or the One True God and Living Lord
- D. This wasn't only just a personal choice but it was a choice that would affect homes and families and generations that would follow – Joshua said, ... *as for me and my household* (families of multiple generations) *we will serve the Lord*
- E. Still applies today, there is a challenge God gives to you today – accept His free gift of a complete life-change (repentance), and choosing new birth through believing in Christ and surrendering your heart and life, entering into a personal relationship with Him as Lord and Savior or ...
- F. Know this, by not making that decision today IS making the alternate choice, to reject life is choosing death, and I guarantee that it is **NOT** the right choice
- G. **** SLIDE ** Question:** What's the choice? Who will you serve?

V. Close

- A. Invitation: *choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*