



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The One Thing that Matters

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Joshua 22:1-9

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At that time Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ² and said to them, “You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you. ³ You have not forsaken your brothers these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God. ⁴ And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. ⁵ Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” ⁶ So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

⁷ Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua had given a possession beside their brothers in the land west of the Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away to their homes and blessed them, ⁸ he said to them, “Go back to your tents with much wealth and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers.” ⁹ So the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the people of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had possessed themselves by command of the LORD through Moses.

(Pastor prays)

In the early fall of 1945, the greatest armed conflict America had ever been in came to an end with V. E. day in May and V. J. day in August. What would be known as World War II was over and all those American soldiers who had spent four years making war came home and made peace and gave rise to the Boomers, an unprecedented growth in America. In a similar fashion, by Joshua 22, seven years of fighting has come to an end and the Israelites’ swords are to be

beaten into plowshares. After Caleb got his mountain in chapter 14, Joshua distributes the land in earnest in chapters 15 through 19. The allotment begins in chapter 18. They pause at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting. In chapter 19 the inheritance starts back and in chapter 20 the cities of refuge are formed. In chapter 21 the Levites get a place for their cattle, which brings us to Joshua 22. The last group to be dispatched and to see their inheritance is on the other side of the Jordan river. Way back in Chapter 1, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh pledged to fight like everybody else, and in Joshua 22:1-3, Joshua commended these tribes for their faithfulness. Verse 3 says they are commended for staying in the fight for many days, and verse 4 says that God has been good and you are free to go back to your homes. And then verse 5 stands out like a neon sign and the whole message of the whole chapter is wrapped up in that one verse. One preacher said that the verbs in verse 5 give a comprehensive picture of what a proper relationship to God ought to look like. And the more I studied this one verse, the more I agreed. So before we take The Lord's Supper today, I want to use this one verse to prepare our hearts by way of examination. And I'll ask questions based on the commands because...

A Right Relationship with God is all that Matters

The first question is this. Do you actually love God? Let's read verse 5. *Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God,* Verse 5 says you need to love the Lord your God! The first command in verse 5 is to love the Lord your God. This is similar to what you find in Deuteronomy 6 with the Shema: Love the Lord your God. And it would be the thing Jesus says is the most vital thing, or great commandment, because love is a great motivator. It is a displayed and dynamic affection. Love.

Love is a great intensifier. Think about Genesis 22 when God tests Abraham when He says take now your only son, the one you love. This gives heat to what Paul said in Ephesians 5:1-2, *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* The Gospel makes it so that we can love God and love people.

The Gospel is like this: That God is holy and created you in His image but because of your sin you are separated from God. You deserve to be punished. This is the Gospel. You live under

condemnation without Jesus. The hope of the Gospel and the love of the Gospel is that God has loved us. He gave us Jesus who lived perfectly, and died in the place of sinners as a substitute. God raised Him from the dead. And the hope of the Gospel is that, if you believe that, you receive that, you actually become a child of God. John says it like this in 1 John. I can love God because He first loved me.

To love is to give and enjoy and believe and trust and to be content in. To love is to be grateful and humble. To love is to be worshipful and to be a person of grace, to forgive, to extend kindness and to give the benefit of the doubt. To love is to live in hope. So the first question is do I love God? Why? How?

The second question is...

Do you honor God?

Go back with me to verse 5. Verse 5 says to “love the Lord your God and to walk in His ways.” To walk. Throughout the Bible the words “to walk” would indicate a lifestyle. Enoch walked with God and he was no more. It's a reputation and the general impression you get from someone. It's what Paul has in mind when he talks about conversion in Ephesians 2:1-3. *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived*

Your walk, your manner, your tone, your walk is what it looks like to be with you and around you. It's to experience the real you and not the Instagram you. Here begins the separation between the genuinely Christian and the seeming-to-be Christian.

There are people who have a faith in Jesus that is not a saving faith in Jesus. If you believe in a Jesus that will get you to Heaven but has not affected any other part of your life, so that you don't have to change, that is not the Jesus of the Bible. That's not the Gospel and it will not save you. The Jesus of the Bible calls for a love and a walk. There has to be genuine, tangible evidence that you are walking with God, trusting God, relying on God and there is something in you that is different from everybody else. And Joshua is telling those who are going on the

other side of the Jordan, make sure you are walking with God, honoring God. Make sure that there is actual visible, tangible evidence that you are a Christian.

That's why I think this question is an appropriate one. Do you walk with God? Are you honoring God? Is he your companion, friend, comforter, forgiver? It scares me, honestly, that in a church our size— and the Bible says that I as a shepherd am responsible for the flock of God at Hickory Grove— it scares me often to think of the number of people who are on our rolls that think they are going to Heaven because they are baptized or are associated with Hickory Grove in some way and yet there has been nothing that's changed. It scares me that there are people who think they are technically Christian but have never actually converted. So that's why we ask these questions. Do you love God? Do you honor God? Here's a third question right from the verse.

Do you obey God?

The verb “to keep” shows up in a few places in verse 5. Let's read verse 5 from the beginning and pick out the verb. ⁵ *Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Twice we see “be very careful to keep or observe God's commandments,” His word. This is not just the general tenor of your life and not even the general direction. This is taking seriously the truths found in God's word. It's to explore these truths and to contemplate, to think about, and then to actually obey God. This is why we here at Hickory Grove put such an emphasis on the Bible. Isn't that what Jesus was getting at in Luke 6:46-48. *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.*

Well built. It's what obedience to God does. It builds our lives into well-constructed fortresses of affection that stay standing after the storm. Obedience to God is not legalism but the language of crucified love. It is your faith and hope and love of the crucified Messiah that makes

you want to seek ways to obey Him. A right relationship to God is all that matters. Do you love God? Do you honor God? Do you obey God?

Do you cling to God?

What a great word in verse 5. Let's read the whole thing again and get there to the word – cling. ⁵ *Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling* – there it is. The English translation is really good here and gives us a vivid picture. Yours might say to hold fast. It means to stick to, to stay close, to cleave. In the King James Version it's what you use in a wedding in Genesis 2:24, *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife*. It's used again to describe Ruth as she clings to Naomi. It's used negatively in 1 Kings 11 when it's telling about Solomon clinging to foreign women and their gods. This is the deer panting for the water brooks in Psalm 42. My soul pants for you, oh God. This is the hungering and thirsting for righteousness from the Sermon on the Mount. Here is the Psalmist in Psalm 63:1 saying, *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water*.

I think we cling to God in primarily four ways. We do so *devotionally* when we spend time reading the Bible and through prayer. We do so *doctrinally* as we gain clear, Biblical, Christ-saturated convictions. I think we cling to God *drastically* when it's bad. We don't feel the need to cling, although it's there, until things fall apart. We cling to God when it's bad, when sadness is overwhelming and depressing and painful. I believe we cling *delightfully* when we find that Christ is the center and sum of our joy. Do you love God? Do you honor God? Do you obey and cling to God?

Do you serve God?

Let's finish out verse 5 and see the last descriptor of what it looks like to be in right relationship to God. ⁵ *Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.*" Serve means to labor. Here is the stuff that life is made of. You get up early for work, get

the kids ready. You have occupations, homes, maybe you home school or teach. Maybe you are a doctor or maybe you are retired. Whatever occupies your day, I'm asking you to baptize it. See it as a God-given means to live for Christ. So that if you sell pharmaceuticals or insurance, if you work on cars or teach school, if you keep kids or sell auto parts, do it for the glory of God. There in the midst of that labor, you are being faithful, you are being a witness, you are doing what you do in excellence. So when people find out you are a Christian they will see that this is how Christians live. You are doing it with a Gospel investment in the people that God has placed around you. Maybe it's suffering. You are suffering with joy. Maybe you are being asked to make a compromise and you are now setting a righteous example. Maybe you are being treated poorly and you are showing a gracious attitude in return. Because for everyone in here and with so much going on, it's good to remember that a right relationship with God is all that matters.

As we prepare for The Lord's Supper there are five questions that should guide us as we align our hearts with the Lord Jesus:

Do you love God?

Do you honor and walk with God?

Do you obey God?

Do you cling to God?

Do you serve God?

These questions are valuable to help us remember that a right relationship with God is all that matters.

(Pastor prays)