



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Last Words of a Dying Man

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Joshua 23:14-16

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¹⁴ “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 word 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. ¹⁵ 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 evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, ¹⁶ if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded 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 off the good land that he has given to you.”

(Pastor prays)

When the end comes, the frivolous things in life tend to fade. I've said goodbye to lots of dying people in my 30 years of ministry, and I've never known any to speak of politics or economics or football games at the end. The approach of death has a way of clarifying our thoughts and putting a focus on what really matters. So, what really matters to you?

In the text before us, the great man named Joshua is breathing out truth that he hopes will last. He's dying. He even says so in verse 14. ¹⁴ “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, We all have to die, and for Joshua the dawn of his day is near. And with an economy of language, Joshua doesn't talk about Jericho and Jordan and conquest of land. Joshua talks about God, and he puts our vision into that of a tunnel. And near the end of his life he invites us to think about God.

So for the next few minutes I want to use this passage to get your eyes on God. I want you to see God and love God and trust God and believe God and worship this, the living God. I don't want to look at COVID or hurt feelings or Joe Biden or mask mandates or your terrible job. Here on the Lord's day, Joshua is inviting us to be captivated by God, to behold God, to stand in awe of God, and by faith in Christ give ourselves fully to God.

There is a winnowing in the land separating the wheat from the chaff, and those that withstand the sifting are the men and women who find their full identity in Christ alone. And that's what I'm asking you to do today! Let's put it all aside for a minute and think about God because...

When God is Your All, All Will Be Well

What does Joshua teach us about God?

God is good

Joshua 23:14 says, since I am close to dying, this is what I want you to know about God. ¹⁴ *“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 word 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.”*

You see the good things that the Lord promised. And in verses 15 and 16 we see Joshua talking about the good land that God has given them. This idea stretches back into the heart of how God deals with His people. In Exodus 3, God promised Moses He would bring His people into the “good land.” In Numbers 14, when Joshua and Caleb spied out the promised land they called it “good land.” Ten times in Moses’s farewell address he called Canaan the “good land.”

Do you know that meditating on God's goodness is great motivation for obedience and worship? God's goodness is the redemptive theme that runs throughout the entire Bible leading all the way up to how we are made into sons and daughters of God through faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus. In Romans 8 it says, ¹⁵ *“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”*

Joshua is teaching us that God is good. Do you believe that and trust that He is working all things together for good? Maybe you should list some of the good things that God has done for you this week. God is good.

God's word is true

Let's read verse 14 again. ¹⁴ *"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 word 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.* Not one word has failed. Joshua is giving us a promise that should bolster our confidence and put steel in your spine. God has so remarkably and literally fulfilled His promises that not one of His enemies could state that even the smallest promise hadn't come true. It's why we believe that when you know the Bible, you know God. He tells us of Himself. Not only that, God tells us our condition and our means of reconciliation. He tells us the way of living, the path to healing and the dangers of sin. God tells us through His word the joys of the Gospel. God is good. God's word is true.

God never fails

That seems to be the truth that Joshua is driving into the hearts of the people in verse 14. He says, you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed. We fail and sin and mess up and get lazy and get distracted and off course. But not God. The arc of His eternal will always bends toward completion. His *will* will be done. It's how Paul encouraged the church at Philippi isn't it? Philippians 1:6 says, ⁶ *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* As He molds and fashions and shapes and bends and prunes and heals, burns off the dross and shapes that clay and tends to the vine, God is making you into Christ's image over time and He never fails in what He does. God is good. God's word is true. God never fails.

God is personal

Look how Joshua speaks of God in verses 14 through 16. Three times He is called the "Lord **your** God" as if to emphasize the very personal nature and eminence, the closeness of God. This God is to be known and loved and worshipped personally. This is a good place to introduce the

understanding of general revelation and specific revelation. General revelation tells us there is a God; we see it in the sun and clouds and seasons and atmosphere and human kindness. There is a God. Specific revelation is God revealing Himself to us in His word and more specifically in the person and work of Christ. To know God personally He can only be known in Christ. Here is the exclusive nature of the Gospel that we find in I Timothy 2:5, *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, that points us to the great promise Christ makes to His people in the Great Commission: I will be with you always. Listen, even when you don't feel like He is, He's with you. So let me ask you, is God with you? Why do you believe that? How should you change your worry and anxiety and practices?

God is consistent

I'm going to make this short. Joshua dies but God remains. Joshua's comforting word is, I'm going the way of all the earth. I will die. God remains and sustains us. We all die. People we love die. You can't die with them. God lives and loves and heals and sustains and as long as you draw breath, God is using you. Rejoice in that!

When God is your all, all will be well. God is good. God's word is true. God never fails. God is personal. God is consistent.

God is just

in verses 15 and 16, Joshua turns to a warning to remind us that God is not only good, He is also just. This warning reminds us that sins against a holy God are tried in a heavenly court and the sentence is death. In verse 15 Joshua warns of destruction. This is the same warning God has given since He told Adam not to eat of the tree of life because the day that you eat of it you will surely die. But this just warning from God is motivated by holiness and love. It's just like the warnings you give your children: Don't touch the stove. Don't play in the street. Wear your seat belt. Don't hang around with that person because you know the consequences.

Every one of these warnings found in the Old Testament should press us to love even more the grace of God found at the cross of Jesus. There at the cross, the justice of God is met in full on our standing or our substitute, Jesus. And you receive this grace when He takes your sin. Has the justice of God made you run to the cross? Or do you just keep running away? God is just.

God is angry

I want to make this point at the risk of being misunderstood because I think it further intensifies our love and understanding of grace.

When you read all the Old Testament the anger isn't just with sin. The anger is placed on *sinner*s. The greatest danger wasn't the Canaanites. Their greatest danger was God. When we are saved, it is the grace of God that is saving us from the wrath and anger of God. God is the righteous judge. This jealous God described in verse 16 says that if you have another god, and idle, the anger of God is kindled against you. It's not some impersonal sin you commit. God is angry with you. It's what makes the grace of God so utterly unbelievable. God doesn't save people who are already His children who are just away from Him. He saves His enemies and that's the miracle of the Gospel. It's the very point Paul makes in Romans 5:8-10. ⁸ *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* ⁹ *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* ¹⁰ *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

God is angry but for those in Christ that anger is emptied completely on the cross of Jesus. And from that cataclysmic event, now only love remains. It's a saving love, an extravagant joy-giving love; it's forgiving and healing. It is a strengthening love. All of that is found in Christ. When God is your all, all will be well. Is He? Is all well with your soul? Bow with me in a mind of prayer and think about what hurts, what sin, what wound, what hardness, what person, what heartache? May the grace of God in Jesus make it so all is well.

(Pastor prays)